

ITEM No ...8.....

REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 26 OCTOBER 2015

REPORT ON: CO-ORDINATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF ADVICE SERVICES

REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

REPORT NO: 385-2015

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report details future arrangements for Council based advice services in Dundee. Council services restructuring and the implementation of Health and Social Care Integration mean new arrangements are required to ensure the duties and functions of services such as Welfare Rights (including income maximisation), Dundee Energy Efficiency Advice Project and CONNECT continue to be implemented and co-ordinated satisfactorily and that there is clarity around operational line management responsibilities.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Policy and Resources Committee:

- 2.1 Agrees the proposed arrangements for advice service functions to be integrated and co-ordinated following reorganisational changes as described in paragraph 4.7 of this report.
- 2.2 Agrees the transfer of the Welfare Rights Section (including income maximisation functions), Dundee Energy Efficiency Advice Project and duties of Corporate Appointeeship to the Corporate Services Department to create a new distinct service area alongside the Scottish Welfare Fund and Connect Service under the direction of the Head of Customer Services and IT in order to provide a “wrap around” service at a local level for people experiencing financial and social exclusion.
- 2.3 Agrees an improved model of advice delivery that provides a more co-ordinated local authority information and advice service whilst meeting the aspirations of Dundee City Council’s Single Outcome Agreement and the national Health and Wellbeing Outcomes.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.0 None.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.0 Dundee faces significant challenges related to increasing levels of income inequality, poverty and social exclusion. Dundee Partnership’s Fairness Strategy underlines this by highlighting that clients are facing having insufficient income, lower life expectancy, greater unemployment and lower educational attainment and that children are less likely to achieve positive key developmental outcomes. Alongside this, welfare reform is seen by Councils and partners as perhaps the biggest policy challenge they currently have to consider in terms of the impact on their services, health services, the voluntary sector and citizens’ income and health. The Dundee economy is forecasted to lose up to £21.12m in benefits each year as a result of the first wave of welfare reform. Impact assessments resulting from the latest budget announcements have yet to be published but they are likely to result in significant further losses to Dundee citizens and its economy.

- 4.1 Advice services such as the Council's Welfare Rights Section have demonstrable skill in securing benefits for Dundee citizens (£4,896,623 in 2014/5) as well as being able to link services together for better client outcomes. Whilst advice services are in danger of becoming quickly oversubscribed due to Welfare Reform, they still offer an effective source of mitigation against its worst impacts as well as being a cost effective safeguard against poverty and its effect on family incomes. With prevalent levels of poverty and inequality continuing to exist in our most deprived areas, advice services must adapt in order to be as responsive as possible to peoples' needs as well as reviewing current practice to ensure increased efficiency and throughput of customers.
- 4.2 Services must also intervene earlier as highlighted by the Christie Commission. Shifting client engagement to an earlier stage and working holistically in Dundee communities ought to be a fundamental requirement of future advice service planning, alongside factors of locality and service user need. However all Council advice services are working on a largely unilateral basis with different outcomes, outputs and performance indicators being the norm. This has occurred largely through an incremental build up of services over decades and service provision that is currently focused on outputs that are reported back in a linear manner within each department. There is no common standard for outcome reporting used within the council in terms of advice provision nor is there full consistency in the approaches taken.

Establishment of an Advice Services Officer Review Group

- 4.3 In June 2015 in response to a report regarding Service and Management Structures (Article III of the minute of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 8 June 2015, report 216-2015 refers), an internal Council advice services officer review group was established, with a membership comprising the Executive Director of Corporate Services, Head of Customer Services and IT, Head of Service (Welfare Rights, Finance and Contracts), Section Leader (Welfare Rights) and the Head of Service (Strategy, Integration, Performance and Support Services). Initially the group was convened to assess and recommend the most suitable destination for the Welfare Rights Section post Health and Social Care Integration. In doing so the group first defined and collated the current work of the Welfare Rights Service within the Social Work Department. The group also began to explore and define principles that would underpin future service delivery and what an improved service delivery model might look like, taking into account the need to have Welfare Rights Services continuing to operating in the clients' best interests.
- 4.4 An improved model of advice was defined by the group as one which provides a more co-ordinated local authority information and advice service whilst meeting the aspirations of Dundee City Council's Single Outcome Agreement and the national Health and Wellbeing outcomes. Citizens would have easy access to services that provide a universal approach to social justice as well as consistent responses and clear outcomes for clients presenting with issues connected with poverty, welfare reform and social exclusion. It would also take a more holistic approach to client need and link clients into wider supports and solutions either within the community, voluntary sector or the wider range of council services.
- 4.5 The group agreed that the characteristics of an improved model would be underpinned by the following principles
- Recognising the role of advice provision in informing the social policy agenda – both locally and nationally.
 - Broadening access to quality benefit, debt and fuel poverty advice and increasing take up of advice for Dundee citizens.
 - Developing the interfaces between localities and advice sector services.
 - Valuing the role of income maximisation and its effect on economic regeneration.
 - Acknowledging existing informal partnerships and increasing the effectiveness of Dundee's service networks generally.
 - Recognising that advice provision should meet national quality standards.
 - Determining community priorities or advice needs generally through coproduction.

- Making connections that promote joint planning and ensure better commissioning of services going forward.
- 4.6 After consideration of an initial options appraisal of the Welfare Rights Section's future destination, the advice services officer review group decided to widen the remit of the review to consider how other internal Council advice services could be integrated in order to meet the characteristics of an improved model of delivery. Such a model would organise services in a more co-ordinated fashion across the city and ensure that they gave citizens consistent access to services offering help on issues connected with poverty, welfare reform and social exclusion.
- 4.7 The group's improved model is illustrated as Appendix 1 to this report. The model illustrated shows how different strands of advice delivery can accept clients seeking advice and assistance through different gateways but still ultimately work towards the same quality outcomes and indicators regardless of initial access point. At this stage development towards integrated advice provision is concentrating on internal Council advice services. However there is scope in future to share practice and outcomes with the city's voluntary advice agencies in an attempt to jointly work towards consistent quality advice delivery and practice across the entire sector.
- 4.8 Committee is also advised that as this model develops operationally, a further review of advice services across the city may be required.
- 4.9 Several destinations of an improved model were considered but the group narrowed them down to three possible options that are most closely connected with current advice service client profiles and presenting issues. The three destinations were the new Health and Social Care Partnership, Corporate Services Department and the new Children and Families Service. In all three cases the improved model with integrated services and functions was considered.
- 4.10 The group considered the three possible options and devised project objectives that they were each compared against. These objectives comprised of the following:
- Better co-ordination of advice services within Dundee.
 - Close alignment to and development of services with regard to the national Health and Wellbeing outcomes.
 - Scope to incorporate systematic financial support, assessment and referral functions.
 - To work more in partnership with vulnerable groups.
 - Possibility of sustained and effective interventions based on current links with staff in all options.
 - Clear anti-poverty focus for welfare rights services.
- 4.11 An impact statement based on the non-monetary advantages and disadvantages of each option was undertaken and this led to the conclusion and recommendation that the Corporate Services Department was the preferred option, but with links and functions to be continued and enhanced in relation to the Health and Social Care Partnership and the Children and Families Service.

Co-ordinating Operations following Introduction of the Advice Services Improved Model

- 4.12 Incorporating several advice teams into one integrated Council service would be followed by each existing team's functions being co-ordinated strategically to offer best value and highest efficiency in terms of what interventions could be offered and how client outcomes could be achieved. Use of a common holistic needs assessment will be developed that empowers clients to determine what outcomes they wish to achieve and how they prefer their advice to be arranged, whether centrally or in their communities, through Council services or by the voluntary sector. A template to assess and track client outcomes will also be developed to monitor improvement and efficacy of outcomes achieved.

- 4.13 As well as integrating Council advice services under one section, co-ordinating operations will be achieved as described through a combination of establishing common core principles of advice provision, monitoring of advice quality, agreeing common performance indicators and data collection requirements and developing advice provision on a locality basis. Advocacy on behalf of service users would contribute in order to ensure that client outcomes are prioritised.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This Report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management.

- 5.2 An Equality Impact Assessment is attached to this report.

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

- 6.1 The Chief Executive and Head of Democratic and Legal Services were consulted in the preparation of this report.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Options appraisal Welfare Rights section 24 July 2015, Craig Mason for the Advice Services Officer Review Group

MARJORY STEWART
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

DATE: 2 OCTOBER 2015

Integrated advice sector provision

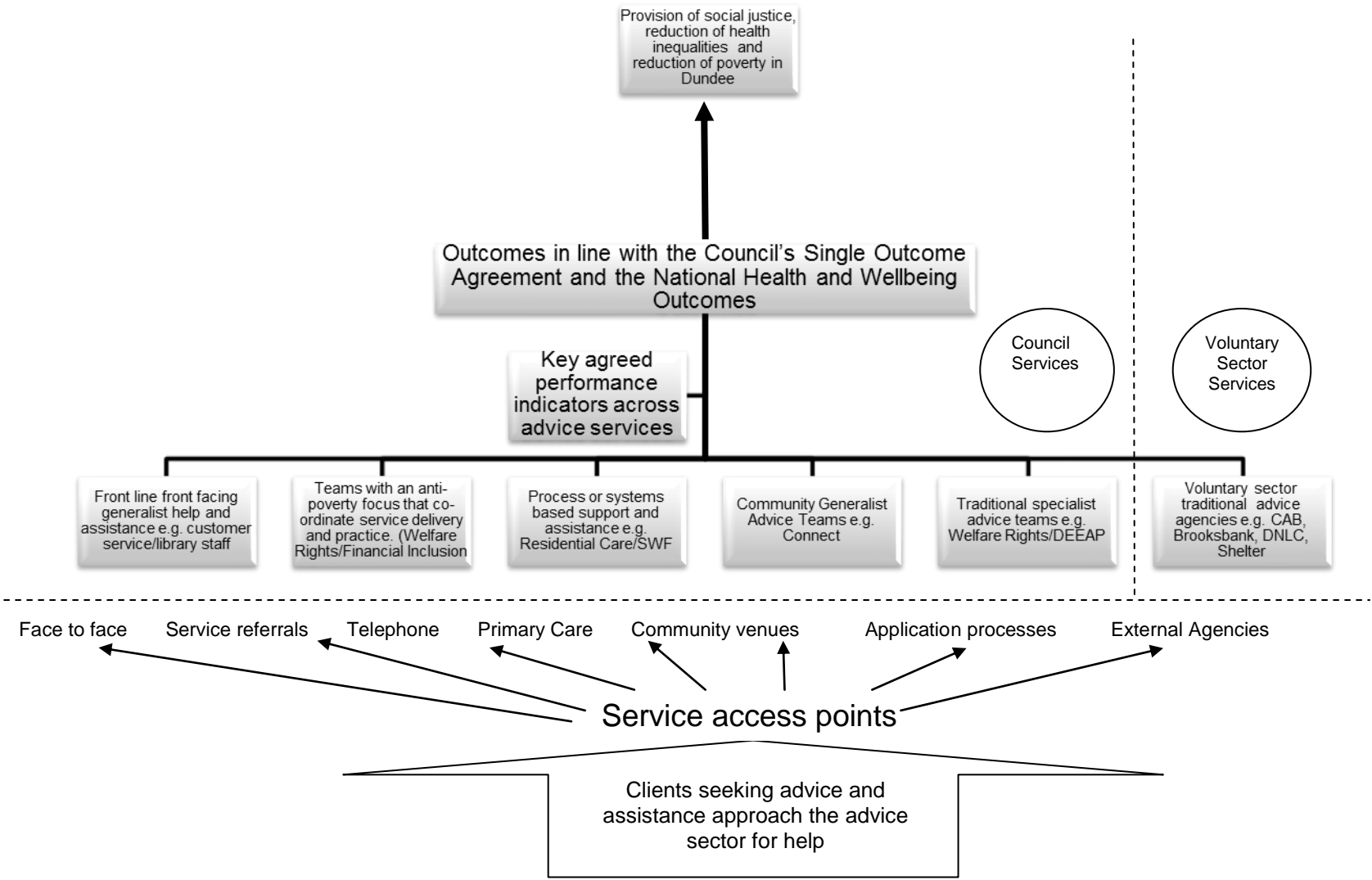


Figure 1: illustrates a model for future integrated advice provision. Clients accessing advice through the various service access points and processes would come into contact with one part of the improved integrated services. These may also come through the Customer Services team, library staff or the voluntary sector. However over time every member of staff in all access points would be working to the same quality standards and reporting back on the same key performance indicators. Collation of statistics and agreed quantitative and qualitative data would in turn feed into the Council's Single Outcome Agreement and the national Health and Wellbeing outcomes.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT TOOL

Part 1: Description/Consultation

Is this a Rapid Equality Impact Assessment (RIAT)?		Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Is this a Full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Date of Assessment:	02/10/2015	Committee Report Number:	385-2015
Title of document being assessed:		Co-ordination and improvement of advice services.	
1. This is a new policy, procedure, strategy or practice being assessed (If yes please check box) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		This is an existing policy, procedure, strategy or practice being assessed? (If yes please check box) <input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Please give a brief description of the policy, procedure, strategy or practice being assessed.		The implementation of revised service delivery and introduction of an integrated advice services model within the City Council.	
3. What is the intended outcome of this policy, procedure, strategy or practice?		The realignment of City Council advice services and co-ordination of advice delivery in order to respond positively to citizens' needs and the changing public services landscape both locally and nationally.	
4. Please list any existing documents which have been used to inform this Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment.		Welfare Reform Committee 1 st Report, 2015: The Cumulative Impact of Welfare Reform on Households in Scotland. National Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Scottish Government Social Research: The Social Fund: A Review of Selected Literature. NOMISWEB Official Labour Market Statistics	
5. Has any consultation, involvement or research with protected characteristic communities informed this assessment? If yes please give details.		No	
6. Please give details of council officer involvement in this assessment. (e.g. names of officers consulted, dates of meetings etc)		Craig Mason, Section Leader (Welfare Rights) Dave Berry, Head of Service (Welfare Rights, Finance and Contracts) Joyce Barclay, Senior Officer Strategy, Performance and Support Services	

7. Is there a need to collect further evidence or to involve or consult protected characteristics communities on the impact of the proposed policy? (Example: if the impact on a community is not known what will you do to gather the information needed and when will you do this?)	No
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Part 2: Protected Characteristics

Which protected characteristics communities will be positively or negatively affected by this policy, procedure or strategy?

NB Please place an X in the box which best describes the "overall" impact. It is possible for an assessment to identify that a positive policy can have some negative impacts and visa versa. When this is the case please identify both positive and negative impacts in Part 3 of this form.

If the impact on a protected characteristic communities are not known please state how you will gather evidence of any potential negative impacts in box Part 1 section 7 above.

	Positively	Negatively	No Impact	Not Known
Ethnic Minority Communities including Gypsies and Travellers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender Reassignment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religion or Belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People with a disability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Age	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Socio-economic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pregnancy & Maternity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please state)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Part 3: Impacts/Monitoring

<p>1. Have any positive impacts been identified?</p> <p>(We must ensure at this stage that we are not achieving equality for one strand of equality at the expense of another)</p>	<p>Consistency of advice service delivery and widening of supports offered to all service users.</p> <p>Closer access for all users of advice to expertise regarding Minority Ethnic Community inputs, specialist debt and tribunal assistance, Health and Social Care services, Fuel Poverty advice, budgeting support, training and development.</p> <p>Improvement of service user outcomes monitoring.</p> <p>Closer links for clients to emergency support and community resettlement supports.</p>
<p>2. Have any negative impacts been identified?</p> <p>(Based on direct knowledge, published research, community involvement, customer feedback etc. If unsure seek advice from your departmental Equality Champion.)</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>3. What action is proposed to overcome any negative impacts?</p> <p>(e.g. involving community groups in the development or delivery of the policy or practice, providing information in community languages etc. See Good Practice on DCC equalities web page)</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>4. Is there a justification for continuing with this policy even if it cannot be amended or changed to end or reduce inequality without compromising its intended outcome?</p> <p>(If the policy that shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination you must stop and seek legal advice)</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>5. Has a 'Full' Equality Impact Assessment been recommended?</p> <p>(If the policy is a major one or is likely to have a major impact on protected characteristics communities a Full Equality Impact Assessment may be required. Seek advice from your departmental Equality lead.)</p>	<p>No</p>

6. How will the policy be monitored? (How will you know it is doing what it is intended to do? e.g. data collection, customer survey etc.)	Implementation of a common data set between existing agencies as well as common client outcomes monitoring tools. Qualitative outcomes will be tracked via service user engagement and feedback through the use of a common holistic needs assessment. How the various service inputs have improved client circumstances and outcomes will be tracked through the use of personal action planning for clients and scored self assessments similar to tools such as the Outcomes web.
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Part 4: Contact Information

Name of Department or Partnership	Corporate Services Department
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Type of Document	
Human Resource Policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
General Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strategy/Service	<input type="checkbox"/>
Change Papers/Local Procedure	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guidelines and Protocols	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Manager Responsible	Author Responsible
Name: Marjory Stewart	Name: Craig Mason
Designation: Executive Director of Corporate Services	Designation: Section Leader (Welfare Rights)
Base: Dundee House	Base: Claverhouse East
Telephone: 01382 433828	Telephone: 01382 431193
Email : marjory.stewart@dundeecity.gov.uk	Email : craig.mason@dundeecity.gcsx.gov.uk

Signature of author of the policy:	<i>Craig Mason</i>	Date: 2 October 2015
Signature of Director/Head of Service:	<i>Marjory Stewart</i>	Date: 2 October 2015
Name of Director/Head of Service:	Marjory Stewart	
Date of Next Policy Review:	Not applicable	