

## **SOLACE (Scotland) Branch Meeting**

### **Improvement Service**

#### **Framework for Public Funding of Advice Services in Scotland**

##### **Purpose**

To update SOLACE (Scotland) on the development of the 'Framework for Public Funding of Advice Services in Scotland'.

##### **Recommendations**

SOLACE (Scotland) is asked to note the progress being made in Local Authorities for applying the 'Framework for Public Funding of Advice Services in Scotland' and provide continued support for embedding the Framework.

##### **1. Background**

- 1.1 Advice Services are important for achieving positive outcomes particularly for people in vulnerable and disadvantaged circumstances whether in relation to money and debt, benefits, housing and homelessness situations to name a few.
- 1.2 Councils have a major leadership role to play and as advice services are discretionary and there is evidence of further resource reductions there is a need to consider options for driving improvements and ensuring sufficient investment in high quality and effective services to meet the needs of the people who need help the services most.
- 1.3 SOLACE members were [briefed](#) on 28 August 2015 on the progress that was being made on the development of the [Framework for Public Funding of Advice Services in Scotland](#).
- 1.4 Evidence highlights 14 Councils have commenced or about to commission a review of Advice Services and therefore a key point for SOLACE members to note as work gets underway to consider this framework as good practice in the process.
- 1.5 The Framework sets out a series of key principles which are designed to improve the quality of service and positive outcomes experienced by service users, whilst helping to ensure best use of resources across the public sector. The Framework sets out the key elements that public funders may wish to consider when reviewing their current advice service arrangements.
- 1.6 The Framework is a voluntary code which seeks to develop and embed best practice across the advice sector. Individual Councils and other funding organisations will, of course, continue to make their own decisions concerning service provision and funding. Each Council may, however, wish to consider applying and embedding the principles of the Framework when considering how they design, fund and deliver advice services – whether they be in-house or externally delivered.
- 1.7 The Improvement Service, together with the Scottish Government and Scottish Legal Aid Board (SLAB), have progressed activity in relation to adopting the Framework. SLAB have progressed the [new model of accreditation](#) of Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers and the Scottish Government's Advice Services

Working Group has published its [Review of Publicly Funded Advice Services in Scotland](#).

- 1.8 Practitioners also contributed to the national discussion on [Creating a Fairer Scotland](#) by exploring the developing role advice services play in tackling inequalities and encouraged to provide feedback on national projects relating to [improving reporting on money advice](#) and [developing quality standards of advice](#).
- 1.9 A brief paper was circulated to the Directors of Finance in Scotland's LA's forum in January 2017 to update on the development of the framework and raise awareness of the multiple benefits of money advice services, the potential impact of budget cuts and to highlight work being undertaken by the IS.

## 2. Review of Local Authority Commissioning of Advice Services

- 2.1 The IS has carried out a review across all 32 LA's to identify progress for embedding key elements of the framework and offer hands on support.
- 2.2 A survey was issued in July 2017 to all 32 LA's to identify the governance arrangements across all LA's for advice services, funding models, monitoring arrangements and areas being considered for the future and to identify key challenges and support needs for embedding the key principles of the framework
- 2.3 The survey was followed up with a series of one to one interviews.
- 2.4 A workshop was delivered in October 2017 bringing LA Commissioners of advice services together with national funders and representatives from UK Money Advice Service, Scottish Government and Scottish Legal Aid Board to share knowledge and discuss the challenges for embedding the framework.
- 2.5 Stakeholders requested further support for shared learning through webinars as a useful method for LA commissioners to engage. The first [webinar](#) sessions were delivered in March 2018 in collaboration firstly, with **North Lanarkshire Council** and, secondly, **Highland Council, which outlined** its new approach for commissioning of advice services 2018/19. A range of [case studies](#) continue to be published on the IS webpages and will be made available on the [Scottish Local Government Innovation Exchange](#).
- 2.6 The IS carried out a separate review to identify the quality monitoring and performance reporting arrangements used for money advice services.
- 2.7 The outcomes of the review have been published on the Framework for Public Funding of Advice [IS webpage](#).
- 2.8 Although the key findings from the latest survey highlight that LA's are making some progress in applying the framework, further ongoing improvement is needed to embed fully.
- 2.9 The majority of LA's continue to fund advice services through a grant funding model agreement with service level agreement. The review identified that LA's would benefit from working more closely in partnership with the services they fund and when reviewing the quality monitoring and performance reporting arrangements.

## 3. Key findings

- 50% of LA's have shifted from a 1-year grant funding arrangement to longer term funding model, ranging from 2 to 4 years, with the majority covering a 3-year period

- 7 LA's proposed savings to advice services in 18/19 and 2 LA's had those savings rejected by Elected Members
- 5 LA's have shifted from a grant funding model to a new formal tender and contract agreement from April 18
- 3 LA's confirmed proposals to tender for new contracts later in 18/19 (July, Oct, Dec 18)
- 1 LA is considering moving from a grant funding model towards a tender and contract agreement in 19/20
- 14 LA's have confirmed an 'Advice Review' will be ongoing
- 5 LA's confirmed restructuring of in house advice services continues

#### **4. Next Steps**

- 4.1 The following steps will be undertaken in partnership with councils and other stakeholders by the IS in 2018/19, as part of its contract with the UK Money Advice Service (MAS)..
- 4.2 Review the use of the framework in relation to LA decisions on funding and commissioning of advice services in 18/19
- 4.3 Work with LA's to review processes and procedures required to implement and evidence the framework
- 4.4 Prepare a checklist of evidence required to demonstrate effective application of the framework
- 4.5 Develop guidance on the use of the framework in partnership with key stakeholders
- 4.6 Arrange an event to promote and support the use of the agreed guidance on a national basis
- 4.7 Establish mechanisms to assess and review the effectiveness of the agreed guidance on an ongoing basis
- 4.8 The IS, in partnership with the Money Advice Service, will continue to lead on the collation and analysis of data for the [Common Advice Performance Management Framework](#) (CAPMF). Formerly, the framework was known as the Money Advice Performance Management Framework (MAPMF). Following consultation with LA's in 2017, it was agreed that the framework would be extended to include welfare rights advice.
- 4.9 Continue to work together with Scottish Government and SLAB in relation to the new accreditation model for the [Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers](#) and future commissioning of advice services.
- 4.10 Seek to engage with Scottish Government to discuss options for sustaining this broad area of work once responsibility for funding such initiatives transfers from MAS to the Scottish Government during 2018/19.

#### **Conclusion**

This paper has summarised the range of activity through the '[Improving Outcomes in Money Advice](#)' project since the last SOLACE briefing on the 'Framework for Public Funding of Advice Services in Scotland'. SOLACE members are asked to note the progress and continue to encourage Local Authorities to continue to apply the key principles of the framework.

#### **Further Information**

Further information on the Framework is available from the Improvement Service: -

<http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/framework-for-public-funding-of-advice.html>

[sandra.sankey@improvementservice.org.uk](mailto:sandra.sankey@improvementservice.org.uk)