

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 developing the 'Framework for Public Funding of Advice Services in Scotland'.

1. Background

1.1 The development of the [Framework for Public Funding of Advice Services in Scotland](#) emerged from research conducted, firstly, by the Improvement Service¹ (IS) and, secondly, by the Scottish Legal Aid Board² (SLAB).

Both reports highlighted opportunities for better co-ordination amongst strategic funders³ of funding for advice services. The research reports also set out a range of improvements that could be made concerning the quality, focus and management of advice services.

In particular, the research highlighted issues of overlap and duplication existing alongside areas of service gaps. It also noted concerns regarding the focus and quality of some advice provision. As a major funder and provider of advice services, Local Authorities have a key role to play in driving up standards and ensuring maximum impact for users of advice services. The Framework seeks to support such developments.

2. Framework for Public Funding of Advice Services in Scotland

2.1 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 help 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 [Money Advice Services across Scotland's Local Authorities](#) report was published in August 2013 as part of the action research project 'Improving Outcomes in Money Advice' which is joint-funded by the Money Advice Service and the IS.

² The [Landscape Review of Publicly Funded Legal Assistance](#) was published by SLAB in April 2014 as part of the Making Justice Work programme.

³ (such as Councils, Scottish Government and major grant bodies)

2.2 The Framework aims to:-

- assist funders to ensure they are working in line with good practice for funding of advice services;
- minimise duplication and overlap by encouraging referrals and a joined-up strategic approach between funders and providers;
- drive improvements in the quality and impact of advice services; and
- focus on the best outcomes for clients, whilst providing good overall value for the public purse.

2.3 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.

2.4 A launch event for the Framework took place earlier in the year, with input from Scottish Government, Local Government, national funders, Citizen's Advice and other stakeholders. The event included opportunities for participants to contribute to the development of the Framework through a range of workshops focused on specific elements.

2.5 A [report](#) summarising the discussions from the launch event and next steps was published on the IS website alongside videos of keynote speakers and interviews with participants. Additional material, including good practice examples, will continue to be developed and added to the IS website and the knowledge hub group which has been set up for communication with wider stakeholders.

3. Next steps

3.1 Whilst the framework sets out broad principles, to achieve the full impact intended, detailed elements of the Framework require development, testing and roll-out. This will be undertaken through a series of workstreams, which will engage a wide range of stakeholders who have an interest in the Framework. Examples of specific elements that are underway are summarised below:-

Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers

The Scottish Government appointed SLAB to consult with the sector around developing a revised and improved model for accreditation. The IS has been involved in the working group considering possible options. A report was submitted to ministers and an announcement will be made shortly on how this work will be taken forward.

Performance Management

The IS is working with UK Money Advice Service and all Scottish Councils to develop a [money advice performance management framework](#). This aims to build consensus on the key outcomes and indicators and to provide a framework for measuring the

value and benefits of advice services. This will also help facilitate exchange of good practice between Councils.

Other Developments

A range of other activities are either underway or planned that will involve development and embedding of the Framework. These include:-

- Work towards identifying and reducing duplication in funding, by developing model wording for applications and exploring options for data sharing between funders;
- Production of good practice case studies and learning points on effective partnership working, improving the customer journey and targeted delivery models;
- Trialing use of the Framework as a self-assessment tool for reviews of advice services, together with hands-on facilitation support;
- Exploring options for undertaking further client survey work for advice services, building the evidence base to understand what works for whom and in what circumstances; and
- A major event scheduled for 27 October 2015 in Glasgow, which aims to further raise awareness of the Framework, encourage organisations to embed the key principles and engage with the Framework's ongoing development.

Conclusion

This paper has summarised the work that is underway to develop and embed the 'Framework for Public Funding of Advice Services in Scotland'. SOLACE members are asked to note the progress.

Individual Councils may wish to consider applying and embedding the principles of the Framework when considering how they design, fund and deliver advice services (including both in-house and externally commissioned services).

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>

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