



Accurate Reporting and Case Management Systems



Introduction

The ultimate aim of the Money Advice Performance Management Framework (MAPMF)¹ is to provide a common performance management framework which is used by both the organisations delivering money advice and their funders. Importantly, effective reporting as part of the framework allows money advice services funded by Scottish local authorities to demonstrate the work that they do, and record the positive impact they are having on the lives of their clients. However, there are still improvements which can be made to enhance the quality of data available, with clear benefits for services.

This briefing paper focuses on the importance of accurate recording and reporting in relation to money advice services, paying particular attention to the case management systems used. It also offers recommendations for both services delivering money advice and their funders, with the aim of encouraging more accurate recording and reporting in the sector.

1 Now known as the 'Common Advice Performance Management Framework (CAPMF)' due to its expansion to include welfare rights advice.

The Importance of Accurate Recording and Reporting

Between the financial years of 2015/16 and 2016/17, local authority investment in money advice services decreased by around 5%, representing an ongoing trend of declining resources.² As such, future investment levels in the services remain uncertain. Alongside this decrease in investment, demand is rising: from 2015/16 to 2016/17, the number of people contacting money advice services increased by 5%, and the number of new clients supported increased by 3%. Money advice services are required to do more with less, with past trends indicating that this is likely to continue.³ In this context, the ability to make the case for continued investment, as well as experimenting with alternative service delivery models, is key to sustaining and further building upon the effectiveness of the services.

By tracking the activities, outputs, and outcomes delivered, services can demonstrate the work that they do, as well as their impact on clients' lives. Accurate reporting also allows for any changes resulting from service redesign to be tracked, thereby facilitating comparison to prior service delivery models. This is vital when making evidence-based, and therefore effective, decisions in relation to the future delivery of the service.

2 www.improvementservice.org.uk/documents/money_advice/MAPMF/mapmf-annual-report-201617.pdf

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Money Advice Case Management Systems in 2016/17

An effective case management system is key to facilitating accurate recording and reporting of money advice service activities, outputs, and outcomes. The flexibility of the system is also important, due to changes as a result of welfare reform, and particularly as services consider including the measurement of the softer outcomes of advice (i.e. their impact on clients' health and wellbeing). Measuring these outcomes is key to fully demonstrating the benefits of the service, and therefore making the case for continued investment.

For the first time, during the 2016/17 iteration of the MAPMF, local authorities were asked which case management systems were used by the in-house and external money advice services they fund. Gathering this information is intended to facilitate knowledge-sharing across local authorities in relation to the customisation of case management systems to fit the MAPMF reporting requirements. Often, the data returns indicate that one local authority has developed a solution to a recording problem experienced by another local authority using the same system.

Table 1: Case Management Systems Reported to be in Use in 2016/17⁴

Rank	Case Management System	Number of Local Authorities Reporting Use
1	CASTLE	15
2	PG Debt	13
3	AdvicePro	11
4	MACS	5
5-	Time Matters	1
5-	MAFICS	1
5-	ADVISERNET	1
5-	BrightOffice	1
5-	SWIFT	1
5-	MAT	1
5-	CareFirst	1
5-	Money Matters	1
5-	Merchant Software Case Recording	1

All 32 Scottish local authorities provided information on case management systems. As can be seen by the total numbers reported in Table 1, the majority reported that multiple systems were in use. This is mainly due to different funded services using different systems. However, some local authorities have also shared that different systems are used within the same service.

The most common system, reported to be in use 15 local authority areas, was CASTLE. This system is used by the majority of Citizen's Advice Bureaux, which are often funded by local authorities. The second most popular system, reported to be in use in 13 local authority areas, was PG Debt. The future of PG Debt is discussed below. The third most popular system was AdvicePro, which was reported to be in use in 11 local authority areas. Following AdvicePro, five local authorities reported using MACS. There were also several other systems reported, which were each used by one local authority and often designed on an individual basis, such as Time Matters, Money Matters, and BrightOffice.

It should be noted that, following a final update of the Common Financial Statement trigger figures in March 2018, PG Debt will no longer be maintained by its developer.⁵ This also means that it will not be updated in future in line with the Standard Financial Statement. All services, therefore, are strongly advised to switch to another case management system as soon as possible.

Further discussions with local authorities and their funded services have also highlighted that some case management systems do not allow accurate service-wide reports to be generated. This is highly problematic as it does not allow for either the accurate demonstration of the activity and impact of the service, and does not facilitate evidence-based decision-making. Any services experiencing this issue with their case management system should transfer to another as soon as possible.

Several local authorities have highlighted that they are in the process, or are planning to, transfer to a new case management system, chiefly in order to enable better recording and reporting, which they hope will facilitate more informed decision-making. Those that have relatively recently transferred noted that, the more services with similar reporting requirements that have acquired the same system, the easier it is to push for changes at the development level.

Conclusion

While getting reporting right is extremely important in every sector, it is particularly important for a non-statutory service which is often subject to cuts. This is necessary in order to demonstrate the impact of the service and thereby facilitate effective decision-making in regard to service transformation and future investment.

At present, the case management systems used within each local authority vary in terms of the number in use between and, in some cases, within services. Efforts should be made by both money advice services and their funders to simplify recording and reporting mechanisms. Additionally, services that are using PG Debt are advised to transfer to another case management system as soon as possible, as PG Debt will not be maintained in the future.

Listed below are recommendations for both services delivering money advice and their funders. It is vital for the future effectiveness of the sector that both work more closely together to create a more logical system of recording and reporting.

Recommendations

For money advice services:

1. Where possible, services should use one case management system only.
2. Where a case management system is no longer being developed or maintained, or it is indicated that this will be the case in the near future, services should transfer to another system as soon as possible.
3. Services using the same system should form working groups or forums to share challenges and solutions. There is also potential that these groups could act as the primary channel through which any additional requirements can be communicated to the system's developer.

For funders:

1. Funders should take into account the system(s) currently used by the service and, where possible, align this to future reporting requirements.
2. Funders should take account of, and draw on, existing performance reporting frameworks and indicators, such as the MAPMF, when setting reporting requirements.
3. Funders should recognise the cost implications of requiring reporting on any indicators for which data is not commonly collected, particularly where detailed evidence is required.
4. Each reporting requirement or indicator should serve a clear, useful purpose. Where this is not the case, funders should not ask services to collect this data.

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