



Good practice principles for funding advice services in Scotland Launch Event Summary Report





Introduction

The funders framework: good practice principles

The framework is a high level set of principles that forms that basis of providing funders with assurance that they are working in line with good practice.

The development of the good practice principles by the Scottish Legal Aid Board, the Improvement Service and Scottish Government stems from research, which highlighted the need for better partnership working, co-ordination of funding for advice and improving performance management and measuring of client outcomes. Consultation took place during 2014 and stakeholders welcomed the framework.

Over time, with the input of interested parties, we will develop supplementary material that expands upon each bullet point in the framework. Supplementary material may include guidance notes, tools, good practice case studies or simply contact details for key personnel.

Some supplementary material is available now. For example, under the service delivery section, the Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Provision forms a key part of the supplementary material for the element relating to quality standards.

Purpose and format for launch of the funders framework

Along with keynote speakers from Scottish Government, COSLA, the Scottish Legal Aid Board, the Improvement Service and the Money Advice Service, the event offered plenty of opportunity for participation through workshops and discussions around priority areas for development. You can see how the day unfolded via [Storify](#). Our thanks go to all speakers and participants for their valuable contributions on the day.

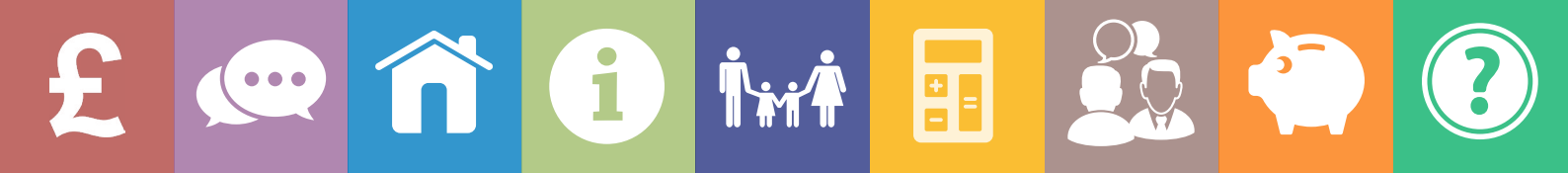
The workshops looked more in depth at particular sections of the framework and assisted in drawing up plans for priority areas. These set the direction for implementation of the framework and provided an opportunity for people to get involved or flag interest in future work.

The launch of the framework is intended to set the agenda for improvement work in the area of advice.

Development of plans

Our aim is to build on the collaborative and consultative nature of the work that developed the good practice principles.

We are planning to continue a collaborative approach to this work, using our dedicated staff time to help gather the expertise of the sector, to collectively deliver more for the



people experiencing problems who need information, advice and representation. You can find the contact details for those working on the framework on page 7. We look forward to your contribution.



Endorsements

The [good practice principles for funders of advice services](#) received a warm welcome from speakers on the day.

Quotes from the key speakers and links to videos:

Marco Biagi MSP, Minister for Local Government and Community Empowerment

The framework was endorsed by Marco Biagi, Minister for Local Government and Community Empowerment, who said in his opening speech: "Advice services provide essential support to communities and help some of the most vulnerable people in our society address complex and difficult issues every day. Whether it is debt, housing problems or benefits issues, this valuable support can often prevent situations from spiralling out of control. This new framework promotes best practice aimed at getting value for money and finding the best outcome for people facing problems."

You can [access the video here](#).

Cllr Harry McGuigan, COSLA Spokesperson for Community Well-being and Safety

Cllr Harry McGuigan, COSLA Spokesperson for Community Well-being and Safety, said that "getting the buy in from all key partners is essential and local authorities are only part of solution. We need to drive forward improvements and it cannot be done by one single organisation. It's absolutely necessary that we work together in partnership and that we believe in the same outcomes and a common understanding. It's very easy when you are faced with increasing demand on resources to forget and get side tracked what we are actually trying to achieve. We need to give people the tools to support themselves as much as possible and it is important that the right type of help comes in at the right time in the right way. We need to listen to each other and learn and co-operate and support each other".

You can [access the video here](#).

Colin Lancaster, Deputy Chief Executive, Scottish Legal Aid Board

One of the key messages from Colin Lancaster, Deputy Chief Executive, Scottish Legal Aid Board was that "the funders' framework is about improving outcomes for people who have problems and some of these will be everyday life problems, or legal problems and looking for legal solutions.

"There is a need for better partnership working and funding and co-operation on the ground... There has been a strong collaboration of public and statutory sector and the process of getting here we want to build on and continue to work on the good practice of implementing the framework. We need to do some work to develop the guidance, tools and good practice to develop the framework to help others move forward."



You can [access the video here](#).

Colin Mair, Chief Executive, Improvement Service

Colin Mair, Chief Executive, Improvement Service, spoke about the wider context of advice services: "We are seeing increasing patterns of demand on services as our finances are going down. Effective advice is central to empowerment and the ability to manage risks and relationships but advice alone is not enough; access to secure and decent employment and strategies to reduce inequality are needed.

"We need to think rationally and when money is tight and not become deeply competitive. Money advice is core business for anyone interested in serious outcomes in relation to health and well-being, learning and community safety and we must improve outcomes, reduce inequalities and improve performance."

You can [access the video here](#).

Lesley Robinson, Executive Director, Money Advice Service

Lesley Robinson, Executive Director, Money Advice Service, started her speech by highlighting that "we need to make sure that debt advice is joined up with other services and that people are referred to the appropriate services. It's important that we reach out to people who are simply not aware that the services exist or who for a variety of reasons may be reluctant to use them. By defining the outcomes we all hope to achieve and by consistently measuring performance against them we can be much more confident of what approaches work best in delivering services to clients. I'm really happy that the MAS has been able to support the IS work in developing this framework in conjunction with colleagues with SLAB and Scottish Government. I'm really confident that by taking on board the principles that the framework sets out and by working together at a strategic level we can help more people to overcome their debt problems".

You can [access the video here](#).

Hear from participants of the launch event what they think about the framework. You can [access the vox pop interviews here](#).

Our panel comprised Carolyn Sawyer (BIG Lottery), Sheila McKandie (The Highland Council), Andy Briscoe (Money Advice Service), Colin Lancaster (SLAB), Colin Mair (Improvement Service). The main themes from discussion were:

- Collaboration is needed to overcome a range of issues identified in the sector, in order to achieve the good practice principles set out;
- Increasing demand and constrained funding means that all players need to pull together to achieve more for people facing problems;
- Reducing demand for and cost of advice provision might mean improving the capacity of those receiving advice to deal with future problems on their own and realising the potential for digital delivery of services to divert some demand;
- Information sharing and building relationships across organisations is key and events bringing people together is an important part of that;



- Developing a stronger knowledge base of what works and identify how we can provide the right services for local people in local areas;
- Deliver a range of workshops to promote uptake of the framework and will offer some hands-on support to councils and their partners to embed the principles.

You can [access the video here](#)

The launch event was the beginning of work to improve the sector, not an end point.



Good practice principles for funding of advice services: the next steps

Implementation of the [principles in the funders framework](#) will be taken forward collaboratively by the sector as a whole, with the Improvement Service, Scottish Legal Aid Board and Scottish Government providing dedicated resource to support progress on priority areas.

Summary of key steps for the next 18 month period:

- Develop and implement a Money Advice Performance Management Framework for local authorities
- Consult with the sector on options for a revised model for accreditation to the Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers, then implement the new approach.
- Work towards identifying and reducing duplication in funding, by developing model wording for applications and exploring options for data sharing between funders.
- Produce good practice case studies and learning points on effective partnership working, improving the customer journey and targeted delivery models
- Trial use of framework as a self-assessment tool, with hands-on support
- Explore options for undertaking further client survey work for advice services, building the evidence base to understand what works, for whom and in what circumstances.
- Collate examples of good practice in assessing need for planning purposes and publish paper on what we know so far from research
- Create a Knowledge Hub Group to continue communications, contribute ideas and continue to share knowledge around any developments
- Reconvene as a sector in 2016 to review progress

Please contact any of the team working on the implementation of the good practice principles for funding of advice services if you wish further information on any topic:

- Sandra Sankey, Improvement Service, sandra.sankey@improvementservice.org.uk
- Denise Swanson, Scottish Government, denise.swanson@scotland.gsi.gov.uk
- Hazel Thoms, Scottish Legal Aid Board, thomsha@slab.org.uk
- John Osborne, Scottish Legal Aid Board, osbornejo@slab.org.uk

You can find out more online about the work of the [Improvement Service](#) and the [Scottish Legal Aid Board](#) in supporting the implementation of the framework.



Workshop A: overlap and duplication

Summary

The aim of the workshop was to explore what we mean by overlap and duplication, in the specific context of advice services, and why they might be a problem (or not). Clarifying these concepts was seen as essential by respondents to our consultation during 2014, especially for providers of services. Participants discussed working definitions of overlap and duplication, along with their experiences of duplication in practice, looking at how these might inform the development of tools to assist with providing, funding and planning services.

Key themes

- Overlap and duplication were seen as issues to do with funding from multiple sources going to one organisation; as opposed to problems caused by multiple services serving the same group of clients.
- Participants thought some overlap or duplication in terms of service provision was a benefit in terms of allowing client choice, but that instances of duplication were especially rare.
- The problems caused by multiple funding streams going to one organisation include: the overhead of multiple reporting on management time; funders may be unaware that their project is reliant upon other funds continuing to be available; and, possible issues where additional funding cannot be fully allocated to increasing specific project capacity.
- Funders may prioritise other projects and/or services had they known that another funder was covering a particular project. In the main, problems with duplication result from national funders who lack local knowledge and may see a gap in funding where there is none.
- The competitive element of funding applications can be an issue and a culture shift towards open, flexible and trusting relationships between agencies and funders is required.
- There needs to be greater transparency and accountability when it comes to funding.
- Asking simple questions on funding application forms like “have you applied for any other funding in relation to this” or “what existing funding do you have for this project” may lessen the risk of duplicate funding.
- It was suggested that funding information could be centrally collated and made available online. Participants agreed that this would allow funders to look at a map of advice provision and see funding in an area at a glance. However, it was accepted that keeping this live and up to date may be problematic.
- Commercial sensitivities can be a barrier to sharing information but this may be bypassed by stating the funding levels in bands rather than specific amounts.



Next steps

- SLAB to draft and consult on model wording for application forms that covers other funding sought, or in place, for particular projects or services.
- Consult more widely with funders and providers on the rationale for identifying duplication and overlap in funding of services, as well as collation of data.
- Depending on consultation response, consider piloting data collation in a single local authority area.



Workshop B: strategic approach to outcomes for advice

Summary

Participants at this workshop were asked to share their experiences of focussing on outcomes and hear about SLAB's recent evaluation of the Making Advice Work programme. Respondents to our consultation identified that agreeing strategic outcomes and defining what constitutes good outcomes from advice were priorities for development. The aim of the workshop was to share ideas about what we mean by outcomes in the advice field, how to clearly link these to strategic national and local priorities and how best to collect case level outcomes. Views and experiences have been shared with the Improvement Service's money advice performance management framework project.

Key themes

- Participants were keen to get clarity on what we meant by different types of outcomes – whether justice, advice, client or strategic outcomes.
- Common outcomes at the justice, advice and client level were seen as helpful to give a base upon which to build a bank of evidence on what works and for who (including how to measure these).
- Common outcomes should also assist with funder and provider collaboration, a move away from crisis interventions to preventative approaches, as the difference made to people can be measured, getting away from an approach based purely on volume of casework being undertaken.
- Client outcomes developed by MAS and SLAB for debt and welfare benefits, including their use in a client survey, were viewed as a positive contribution to a common set of outcomes.
- Strategic outcomes go beyond what is achieved at the individual case level and might include things like reaching specific population groups, or achieving particular types of change for people (such as building confidence to deal with a problem in future)
- A strategic approach therefore means looking at why funding should be made available, to resolve which problem for people, and then what needs to be in place to deliver that reach and deliver that kind of resolution.
- Although strategic outcomes are different to client or advice outcomes, measuring whether they are achieved can only be done through individual clients or cases. Working through the differences and links between them might be a helpful process – resulting in a self-assessment tool for policy makers?
- Whilst a national performance framework seeks to put in place generic client outcomes and indicators across areas; a strategic approach is specific to a particular geographic area or area of law.
- Deciding what the social problem is that needs to be tackled and that advice is the best way in which to tackle that issue is a high level decision. The suggested work



to develop the evidence base for advice services' contribution to wider outcomes may assist in highlighting the potential role of advice alongside other interventions.

Next steps

- Explore options for undertaking client survey work for advice services, building on framework and questionnaires developed by MAS and SLAB; with a view to developing the evidence base for advice services' contribution to wider outcomes.
- Seek partner organisation to explore using the framework as a self-assessment tool and provide guidance for others to assist with developing strategic approach to funding advice.



Workshop C: strategic partners and joint funding

Summary

Participants at this workshop were asked to share discussions around how funders have managed to get effective engagement from partners involved in providing, planning and funding of advice services. Participants were asked to contribute ideas around what makes for good partnership or integrated working and how to create mechanisms for sharing information between funders at a local and national level.

Key themes

- Examples were shared around understanding each other's strategic needs and what each partner can contribute
- Work needs to be done around duplication of funding providers, overheads, management costs and looking to establish better use of joint funding. Sharing information between strategic funders- opens up delivery partners. There is a big fear of budget cuts and sustainability of services seen as a core issue. Funders need to secure more for their money.
- There is a need to strike the balance. Partnership working can be very resource intensive and a need for transparency. Funders need to think about full costs. What they are and how they are funded. There needs to be a shared understanding about what good funding looks like.
- There is a real concern around project funding and different funding regimes, different performance management and reporting regimes, managing and reporting on funding takes away from front line delivery.
- Views were expressed around rationalisation of the reporting of funding, needs consensus around core issues and agreement between funders. "Intelligent performance management is the key".
- Learning could be shared from the different joint commissioning approaches, service delivery models, multi-agency approaches.
- It was highlighted that there is a challenge for the voluntary sector in terms of scale and linking with Community Planning Partners.
- There is a need for a trusted intermediary, pooling resources and sharing expertise.
- The challenge of Universal Credit roll out was raised within the group and the increase of 'in work poverty'. There is a need to work closer with businesses, staff and landlords and have dialogue with people to understand needs and views.
- Issues of unmet need. Client groups are changing as people are falling into financial difficulty for the first time. Partners are seeing people for the first time and need to understand the customer and get referrals at an earlier stage.
- Strategic funders need to join up and streamline if serious about tackling poverty and inequality
- Timescales for funding projects needs to be reviewed and more sustainable.



- Funders need to see change in how organisations work, modernise systems and approaches and see this built into core funding, doing things differently like “channel shift” approaches- move to a digital/ phone service for many advice services. A move away from face to face case work as this can be too expensive in many cases but at the same time undertake a proper analysis of customer’s needs.
- Services need to tackle the root causes of a problem and look at service user engagement. How are people in need reached and how can they reduce demand.
- There needs to be more rigorous needs assessment. What can partners share around their local strategy and improve understanding around the real needs in that area.
- There was some discussion around what the CPP can do in leading discussions. If SOAs are at the strategic level what underpins it. Advice straddles a number of outcome areas.
- It was highlighted that there is a need for advice services to link up with other support services and have referral structures.
- There is a need to join up approaches and build on effective partnerships.
- Need to look to core funders building longer term commitments to service providers and more openness and co-ordination.
- There is a potential for national and local co-ordination and look at the evaluation and what funders do with it. A huge amount of performance data is collected and more can be done with it.
- Views were expressed around the potential for similar events at a local authority level and what support external funders can give.

Next steps

- Further engagement with stakeholders involved with planning and funding of advice services to gather more evidence and share examples of various funding models and partnership arrangements.
- Explore the potential for funders to consider pooling resources with other funders of advice



Workshop D: needs assessment for planning purposes

Summary

This workshop aimed to share ideas about how to take forward needs assessment for planning purposes, an area highlighted by respondents to our consultation as a priority area for funders of advice services. Understanding need for advice is critical in reviewing advice services, developing funding programmes and for both writing and assessing project applications. Participants were asked to consider what we mean by need for advice, what models have been trialled before and what opportunities there might be to try out new approaches.

Key themes

- Funders are looking for a way of assessing need at the point of deciding upon funding for an application: how can decision makers discriminate between applications, in terms of how they address unmet need?
- One way to share practice would be by funders sitting in on panels that are making funding decisions at another organisation.
- Participants would welcome guidance or tools, mainly to help in thinking through the specifics of a particular situation, rather than a general template about undertaking bespoke research on unmet need for advice.
- Linking through service design to meeting an identified unmet need is a key part of the kind of tools and guidance people were looking for. There was interest in how to get service users involved in designing ways to meet need.
- The cost of bespoke research into unmet need for advice was seen as high (for example via survey), so the utility of the evidence generated would need to be high to justify it. However, research information would probably never be detailed enough to identify specific pockets of unmet need, which was an important requirement for participants. A summary of what current research evidence shows, would be useful.
- Views were expressed that targeting specifically, or only, on areas of multiple deprivation has its downsides, as it misses middle class strugglers who are coming up against problems for the first time and in rural areas they don't have the same concentration of deprivation.
- Attendees were interested in how best to make use of proxy organisations for assessing any unmet need, for example checking if support organisations have experiencing problems with getting their service users to the right advice.
- At the strategic level, there were questions about how it is decided that funding for advice services should be made available in the first place and whether there is collaboration between funders. An example was given on the collaboration between the Money Advice Service and the Scottish Government in relation to the Making Advice Work programme, and how that then was tailored to fit with the Support and Connect funding being made available by BIG.



- The first step is for elected representatives to identify at a strategic level that there is a problem that requires advice as a response, for a particular group or type of problem. The second stage, where needs assessment fits in, is how to relate the funding available to the general need identified in specific places and contexts.
- Strategic guidance from funders was viewed as helpful in seeing what is going unmet and where applicants should be focusing their efforts.

Next steps

- Summary of what we know already from needs assessment survey work in Scotland and beyond
- Gathering of practice examples from local authorities and grant funding
- Seek partner to trial use of proxy organisations to assess unmet need.



Workshop E: service delivery

Summary

The aim of this workshop was to allow participants to discuss various service delivery models and why quality matters. Discussions around various examples of what works well and how different models achieve different outcomes. Some examples identified through the work of the Improvement Service were shared with the group. Discussions took place around understanding how to improve access and visibility of services and improving the customer journey by building trust between organisations.

Key themes

- Improving referral pathways was seen as key to improving the customer journey as customers who are looking for good quality advice are frequently frustrated that they are not signposted to the correct services and are less likely to follow-up the more often they are signposted to different services. Customers often need to be referred to specialist agencies.
- Funders should look at better training for the sector to help those people understand the boundaries and limitations to providing good quality advice and referring for specialist help when needed.
- Funders need to look at the challenges for organisations in building partnerships with other agencies. Participants felt it is important to have good relationships with people seen as being on the 'other side' e.g. housing benefit services, eviction services to try and resolve issues.
- More specialist telephone helplines was suggested for people to refer to and more co-location of partner services as a solution.
- Views were expressed around accessing services for those who don't rely on traditional communication methods and highlighted that organisations need to review their practices to reflect the needs of customers in these circumstances and remove any potential barriers. Services are focussed on serving the majority, but for the minority who don't use traditional means of communication there can be a large and significant impact of not receiving adequate communication. Often the problem is around services not recording client information, e.g. visual impairment with recommendations for training and improved skills for those on the front line, use of translation services.
- It was felt that online services will become increasingly important but there is a worry that people without online access will be excluded. Services should take into account what customers preference is for access and communication.
- The group shared good practice case examples for identifying barriers and solutions.

Next steps

- Consult with funders to identify how they can share more information about the service delivery models they fund and the support they can provide to the sector.



- Continue to gather in evidence and share examples of good practice in relation to how quality is taken into account in the funding models, how different models achieve different outcomes and improve the customer journey.



Workshop F: performance management and improvement

Summary

The aim of this workshop was to explore the potential for a more co-ordinated approach to performance management and measurement across the advice sector. Robust and comparable evidence of what advice services achieve for their clients is needed to inform future funding decisions. The workshop gave a short overview of work that the Improvement Service has started around developing a Money Advice Performance Management Framework for Local Authorities in Scotland. Whilst this work is focused on money/ debt advice services specifically there is potential for wider application of such a framework.

Key themes

- During the workshop participants discussed the different approaches that are currently being taken to measuring and reporting performance and the range of issues related to performance management.
- The idea of a national framework was welcomed and it was suggested that linking a performance framework with the Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers would ensure buy-in and consistent reporting.
- At the same time though, it was felt that in order to collect good quality data, frontline staff needed to be invested. This links to issues around the question of with whom the performance information is shared and whether it is actively used to make service improvements.
- More generally, participants felt that the purpose for collecting the data had to be very clear. This linked into wider discussion around the key outcomes advice services ought to be achieving.
- Participants agreed that client outcomes were most important especially the softer outcomes around improved well-being. However, there are limitations for advice providers to capture such data. This was partly linked to the issue of some clients disengaging with the service after the advice has been provided.
- The issue of lack of impartiality if client surveys are carried out by the advice provider directly was also raised.
- Participants also discussed what a performance framework should include. It was suggested that the framework should include succinct but meaningful indicators.
- Participants also highlighted the importance of qualitative information and context data to give the full picture of what advice services are delivering. There were some concerns around targets that were set purely on the basis of a small amount of quantitative indicators which could impact the quality of advice that is provided.
- The point was also made that data should be collected over a longer-term period since client circumstances can change and issues such as debt take a longer time to resolve.



Next steps

- The Improvement Service is taking forward the development of a Money Advice Performance Management Framework. This work will be carried out in close cooperation with Local Authorities, colleagues at SLAB as well as involving other national stakeholders.
- All outputs from this piece of work will be published openly and could be used as the basis for wider work around performance management with funders and providers across the advice sector.



Programme

- 9.30** **Registration and Coffee/Tea**
- 10.00** **Welcome and Introduction**
Jan Marshall, Deputy Director, Civil Law and Legal System Division, Scottish Government
- 10.10** **Central Government View**
Marco Biagi, MSP, Minister for Local Government and Community Empowerment
- 10.25** **Local Government View**
Cllr Harry McGuigan, COSLA Spokesperson for Community Well-being and Safety
- 10.45** **Consultation Response and Implementing the Framework**
Colin Lancaster, Deputy Chief Executive, Scottish Legal Aid Board
- 11.00** **Coffee/Tea Break**
- 11.15** **Group Workshop Discussions 1**
Attendees select from one below
- 12.15** **Lunch and Networking**
- 13:00** **Advice Services in the Wider Context**
Colin Mair, Chief Executive, Improvement Service
- 13.20** **Group Workshop Discussions 2**
Attendees select from one below
- 14.20** **UK Money Advice Service View**
Lesley Robinson, Executive Director, Money Advice Service
- 14.30** **Panel Discussion - The Next Steps**
- 14:50** **Close**

