



Findings from second phase of engagement on potential funding models and delivery approaches which could be used to allocate the levy funding devolved to the Scottish Government for debt advice

# Executive Summary

The Improvement Service's (IS) '*Preliminary report on potential funding models and delivery approaches which could be used to allocate the levy funding devolved to the Scottish Government for debt advice*' was published on the IS website in August 2019. Given the limited timeframe in which the preliminary report was prepared it was agreed that a wider engagement process would take place that would enable views to be gathered from all stakeholders or interested parties.

## Engagement Process

A wide range of engagement opportunities were provided which included: an open call for comments; one to one interviews; focus groups; engagement events and an on- line survey.

In the process engagement took place with:

- 1012 actual or potential users of advice services (online survey)
- 18 users of advice services (one to one interviews)
- 46 third/quasi third sector organisations (interviews/ events/focus groups)
- 36 public sector organisations (interviews/ events/focus groups)

This has resulted in it being possible to consider and report a wide range of perspectives.

## Key Findings

- There was broad agreement with the recommendations in the interim report.
- The quality of the service that can be provided should be considered in assessing the effectiveness of any potential funding model.
- One additional funding model was identified – giving levy funding to a single organisation.
- Going forward a national advice strategy underpinned by local agreements is seen as the best way of joining up and sustaining services.
- The third sector plays a vital role in delivering money and welfare rights services and should be included in strategic and local service planning.
- Diversity exists in relation to third sector advice service providers and this is not always recognised.
- The role of health services in supporting advice should be recognised and developed.
- The expectations of people who had never before used advice services was much higher than those who had previous experience of accessing advice services.
- Only 7% of those individuals who had used advice services reported that getting advice had prevented the problem happening again.
- There is a general willingness, regardless of age, economic situation or state of health, to use different digital routes to access advice services.
- All the people who took part in individual interviews stated that hardest step in getting advice was making the initial contact and accepting that they needed help.

## Next Steps

Whilst the suggested activities in the interim report will continue, they will be adjusted to accommodate the views expressed in this second phase. The following actions will be incorporated:

- a generic criterion measuring quality will be included in the evaluation process which is assessing potential funding models
- additional research will be carried out on a further potential funding model that involves giving debt levy funding to a single organisation
- more detailed work will be undertaken on developing an overarching national advice partnership agreement between national and local government underpinned by agreements at a local level. This will include identifying opportunities for third sector involvement.
- consideration will be given as to how the use of debt levy funding could also support activities which result in early intervention and prevention.
- consultation with service users will continue, and this will include an identification of the factors that are likely to reduce the need for repeated support.
- potential partnership opportunities with health services will be identified.

In addition, the following activities will continue:

- an ongoing Scotland-wide mapping exercise which identifies the location, service delivery model and funding source of money and welfare rights advice service in each local authority area.
- the planned evaluation of the two identified tests of change assessing potential funding models based on 'direct grants to local authorities' and 'change/innovation funding'.
- the production of detailed descriptors for each funding model that it has been agreed will be explored further – including the potential for use of more than one model.

## Further Engagement

Engagement will be an essential ongoing element and, as well as an opportunity to comment directly on the findings in this report, is likely to include:

- greater use of the k-hub group
- establishing small cross-sector panels to consider identified issues in more depth
- mapping additional customer journeys to ensure that the views of service users are considered
- regular webinars and events to feedback on research/evaluation findings and to enable interested parties to contribute on an ongoing basis

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# Purpose

One of the main purposes of the Improvement Service's (IS) '*Preliminary report on potential funding models and delivery approaches which could be used to allocate the levy funding devolved to the Scottish Government for debt advice*'<sup>1</sup> was to produce indicative findings that would form the basis of wider stakeholder engagement. The report was published on the IS website in August 2019 and comments invited, either through direct contact with the IS Evaluation Manger or by providing observations on a dedicated khub group,<sup>2</sup> which as at March 2020 has 18 members and offers a digital platform to communicate views.

It was recognised that a proactive approach towards engagement with the many stakeholders who had an interest in money and welfare rights advice services was required. Accordingly, a wide range of approaches including one-to-one interviews; workshops; focus groups and surveys were utilised. The intention was to raise awareness of the report and to enable all those who wanted to comment to be able to do so in a way that best met their needs and preferences. Further information on the engagement methodologies applied can be found in the process section.

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1 [https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/10023/debt-advice-funding-model-prelim-report.pdf](https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/10023/debt-advice-funding-model-prelim-report.pdf)

2 <https://khub.net/group/debt-levy-funding-discussion-forum-scotland>

# Context

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has responsibility for collecting funding for the free-to-consumer debt advice provided by the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) and the devolved nations through a levy on regulated firms. This debt levy funding was devolved to the Scottish Government in January 2019 and has an annual value of around £4 million.<sup>3</sup> Currently, the process by which the levy is collected is the subject of a review.

The FCA is, “currently considering whether a change in the way we collect the debt advice levies will result in better distribution of costs across regulated firms. Also, the FCA is working with MaPS in a working group on the overall funding system for free-to-client debt advice in the UK”.<sup>4</sup>

This would seem to offer an opportunity to reflect on what is meant by ‘debt advice’. The legislation states, “the Treasury may, from time to time, notify the FCA of the amount of the expenses incurred, or expected to be incurred, by the devolved authorities in connection with the **provision of information and advice on debt to members of the public in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.**”<sup>5</sup> Currently, a very narrow interpretation of what is meant by ‘information and advice on debt’ appears to operate, which typically has limited focus on activities that would help prevent the need for debt advice arising. Given that advice is defined as ‘guidance or recommendations offered with regard to prudent future action’,<sup>6</sup> it could be considered that the best way to achieve prudent future action is advice or information which enables individuals not to get into debt in the first place. An increased focus on preventative use of the debt levy fund would be in line with broader Scottish Government policy and approaches. However, it is also recognised that debt levy funding has traditionally been used to fund advice services to those that are in debt and any potential gaps left by a shift in focus would require due consideration.

Nevertheless, whilst acknowledging that there is a requirement to offer advice and support to those who are experiencing difficulties as a result of unmanageable debt, preventing individuals getting into such a position in the first place is equally important. Early intervention approaches, particularly those that support individuals experiencing economic disadvantage, are an important element in strategies to reduce levels of unmanageable debt.

The benefits of early intervention approaches are well documented. Research commissioned by the Scottish Government suggested, “one way the advice sector can encourage more people to get help with their money is by providing more preventative money guidance - stepping in at key life stages to help people respond to those changes and avoid financial difficulties and make the most of their resources.”<sup>7</sup>

Prevention “will improve people’s quality of life, make better use of public money, reduce the need for costly state services and help to safeguard the future”.<sup>8</sup>

3 Financial Claims and Guidance Act 2018.

4 <https://www.fca.org.uk/publication/consultation/cp19-30.pdf>

5 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/10/section/14/enacted>

6 <https://www.lexico.com/definition/advice>

7 <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/minutes/2018/11/tackling-problem-debt-group-papers-october-2018/documents/debt-advice-provision-ekos-report-august-2018/debt-advice-provision-ekos-report-august-2018/govscot%3Adocument/Debt%2BAdvice%2Bprovision%2B-%2BEKOS%2Breport%2BAugust%2B2018.pdf>

8 [https://neweconomics.org/uploads/files/b8278023a5b025649f\\_5zm6i2btg.pdf](https://neweconomics.org/uploads/files/b8278023a5b025649f_5zm6i2btg.pdf)

As well as providing good value for money<sup>9</sup> by reducing the social and economic costs of responding to crises, early intervention is an essential aspect in prioritising, “*preventative measures to reduce demand and lessen inequalities*”.<sup>10</sup>

Debt is, not surprisingly, inextricably linked to poverty, and individuals in the lowest income brackets are four times more likely to have problem debt than those in the highest income bracket.<sup>11</sup> Helping individuals avoid getting into debt and maximising potential income contributes to reducing the inequalities of outcome that result from socio-economic disadvantage.<sup>12</sup>

As well as utilising debt levy funding for prevention or earlier intervention, both of which are linked to improved outcomes, consideration should be given to supporting other initiatives which have a wider positive impact. Research undertaken on ‘*Repeat Clients in the Debt Advice Sector*’<sup>13</sup> indicated that two of the three factors that were most likely to be influential in relation to reducing the number of repeat clients were, firstly, enabling them to gain an ability to manage money and ,secondly, developing a positive approach to debt and money management.

If the debt levy funding is used solely to support the provision of narrowly defined debt advice, then it is likely, for the reasons outlined above, that the opportunity to support sustainable solutions to preventing the problems of unmanageable debt will be lost. The legislative framework and guidance linked to use of the debt levy funding does not preclude it being used for preventative measures. Accordingly, it is recommended that the Scottish Government recognises the opportunity to support preventative work via the debt levy fund. In doing so, consideration requires to be given to the appropriate balance between supporting preventative and curative interventions. Given the previous focus has not been on prevention, it may be useful to develop a phased approach over the next few years whereby an increasing proportion of the fund shifts towards preventative and early intervention measures. It would be important to develop this approach in conjunction with the nation specific delivery plans that MaPS will be implementing as part of their UK remit for financial wellbeing.<sup>14</sup>

Given that future demand for advice services, particularly as a result of the long term economic consequences of COVID-19,<sup>15</sup> is likely to increase, adopting a partnership approach would seem to offer the most sustainable solution. This would enable Scottish Government and the wider public sector to jointly consider how best to utilise the resources that are available to provide money and welfare rights advice and to agree how they might best be deployed.

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9 <https://www.lag.org.uk/?fileid=-17039>

10 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/commission-future-delivery-public-services/pages/2/>

11 <https://www.jrf.org.uk/press/problem-debts-households-poverty-face-difficult-2018>

12 The Fairer Scotland Duty, Part 1 of the Equality Act 2010, places a legal responsibility on particular public bodies in Scotland to pay due regard to how they can reduce inequalities of outcome, caused by socio-economic disadvantage, when making strategic decisions

13 [https://masassets.blob.core.windows.net/cms/files/000/000/838/original/MAS\\_RepeatClientsReport\\_QualitativeResearch.pdf](https://masassets.blob.core.windows.net/cms/files/000/000/838/original/MAS_RepeatClientsReport_QualitativeResearch.pdf)

14 <https://moneyandpensionservice.org.uk/2020/01/21/uk-strategy-for-financial-wellbeing-sets-out-ten-year-vision-to-improve-millions-of-lives/>

15 <https://fraserofallander.org/scottish-economy/emerging-indicators-of-impacts-of-covid-19-on-the-economy-and-households-in-scotland/>

# Engagement Methodology

Lasting from September 2019 to March 2020, the engagement process sought to get the views of as many interested parties as possible. The process used will be described in relation to, firstly the approach taken and secondly, who was contacted and how they were engaged.

The starting point of the engagement activities was the publication of the *'Preliminary report on potential funding models and delivery approaches which could be used to allocate the levy funding devolved to the Scottish Government for debt advice'* (hereafter referred to as the interim report), along with an invitation to comment on its contents. Whilst there was limited response by way of detailed comments submitted on the interim report, the wider engagement strategy that was subsequently developed provided a wide range of feedback and insights which have helped shape this follow-up report. This second phase of engagement was important as the tight timescale for the preliminary report had not allowed sufficient time to gather a wide range of opinion.

## 1. Approach

The first step was to set out a framework for dialogue. The approach taken differed in relation to service funders/providers and service users and the methodology in relation to each will be considered separately

Whilst several of the recommendations in the interim report have, through necessity, started to be actioned throughout the engagement process, it has been stressed that the direction of current and future activities will be influenced by the findings from this more comprehensive engagement process.

For service funders and providers, the suggested models in the interim report were used as the basis of facilitating wider comment and seeking to identify if there were any further potential models that merited consideration.

Discussion also took place on the two models that are currently being evaluated as potential tests of change, 'direct grants to local authorities' and 'change or innovation funds'. The focus was very much on whether the ongoing 'tests of change' were the right ones and if there were any others that should be evaluated.

Having considered the funding models and the planned 'tests of change', the next step was to outline and agree the criteria against which the evaluation of potential funding models would take place. Suggested criteria were put forward and the opportunity was given to suggest new ones or delete existing ones. After any alterations were made to the proposed criteria, a rudimentary ranking exercise took place via the input from consultees.

At the conclusion of each of the engagement sessions, participants were invited to identify barriers and enablers to sustaining advice services and, indeed, to comment on anything else that they thought should be taken into account. By adopting this approach, it was possible to ensure that information was gathered on relevant aspects of the research but also that participants were able to raise other issues that were important to them.

A different approach was required to get the views of those with direct experience of using advice services, as well as the wider population who might, at some time in the future, wish to access advice services. Engaging with those who had not previously used advice services



was important for two reasons. Firstly, it was recognised that there is a significant unmet need in the sector,<sup>16</sup> so it was crucial to engage with people who had never used advice services, but who may well benefit from them. Secondly, there is evidence that access to advice services at key life stages such as redundancy, bereavement, birth of a baby etc<sup>17</sup> can improve financial resilience.

It was considered that asking actual or potential advice service users about potential funding models was a little too abstract and what would be more relevant was to identify their expectations of advice, how and where it should be provided and supplement this by mapping in-depth individual customer journeys. A customer journey map provides a visual representation of a customer’s or service user’s interactions with an organisation, from initial contact to final resolution. The customer’s or service user’s thoughts and reactions are recorded at each step of the journey.

The information collected in this way will be mapped across to each of the identified potential funding models to ensure that service user views and opinions are considered in the assessment of the likely suitability and effectiveness of potential models.

## 2. Process

All local authorities and national advice organisations were offered the opportunity to take part in one-to-one interviews. Six organisations engaged on this basis.

The IS facilitated seven open engagement sessions across Scotland for money and welfare rights advice service funders and/or providers. In the main, engagement with public and third sector representatives took place at separate sessions. This was primarily to ensure that there could be open, frank discussion without any individual or organisation feeling inhibited. Initially, six consultation sessions were scheduled however, additional engagement sessions were requested by the Scottish Public Health Network and AdviceUK and these were also undertaken. A planned session for third sector representatives in Edinburgh had to be cancelled due to insufficient numbers.

Details of the session provided are illustrated below.

Fig. 1 Engagement Sessions

Location	Date	Sector
Glasgow	2nd December 2019	Public Sector
Glasgow	2nd December 2019	Third Sector
Aberdeen	5th December 2019	Public/Third Sector
Edinburgh	6th December 2019	Public Sector
Perth	11th December 2019	Third Sector
Edinburgh	29th January 2020	Health
Stirling	21st February 2020	AdviceUK Members (Public/Third Sector)

16 <https://www.moneyadviceplus.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/supply-2018-participant-report.pdf>

17 [https://masassets.blob.core.windows.net/cms/files/000/000/847/original/Right\\_Place\\_\\_Right\\_Time\\_%281%29\\_%28November\\_2017%29.pdf](https://masassets.blob.core.windows.net/cms/files/000/000/847/original/Right_Place__Right_Time_%281%29_%28November_2017%29.pdf)

# The Findings from Engagement with Funders and Providers of Advice Services

## (a) The Models

In the interim report, seven potential funding models were identified based on a combination of research and limited engagement with key stakeholders. During the subsequent phase two wider engagement process, participants were invited to comment on the suggested models and to identify if there were any 'missing' models. The results in relation to each of the seven models are outlined below.

Given the number of individuals that participated in the engagement exercise and the diversity of the organisations that were represented, it is not surprising that a wide range of views were offered. The findings focus on areas in which there was a degree of agreement – occasionally two opposing positions each had broad support and, as a result, contradictory views might be presented. It is fair to say that one of the few areas in which there was unanimity was the need for additional funding to be provided on a longer-term basis (as opposed to short-term funding models).

Detailed comments that enhance and expand the original thinking were offered in relation to each of the identified models and these will help shape and develop the research and evaluation process. It should be noted that the findings from the interim report were, in the main, confirmed by the subsequent more extensive engagement undertaken in phase two. The range of views presented have been summarised and the comments included are reflective of the general opinions that were expressed but do not include every detail of all the comments received. The report does, however, provide a fair and balanced summary of the main substantive points that were aired across the full range of engagement.

To help understanding, the table at the start of each model outlines the findings included in the interim report from the initial engagement that took place.

## (i) Direct Grants to local authorities



*Distribution of funding directly to local authorities through some mechanism (to be determined).*

*This model was looked upon favourably by the majority of local authority representatives although it was not seen to be attractive by the majority of third sector organisations.*

*There was a recognition that this approach was based on subsidiarity from a national level and providing local autonomy. Many local authority representatives stated that they were already providing funds to other, mainly third sector, advice organisations within their area and, hence, had appropriate mechanisms in place. It was felt they were best placed to ensure that the levy funding sat alongside and complemented existing provision and did not result in duplication of provision. Emphasis was put on the need to adopt a partnership approach and to ensure that all service providers were engaged in the decision-making process.*

*On a less positive note, concerns were expressed about the ability to 'ringfence' any funding awarded and to ensure that a consistent approach to service delivery was adopted.*

The position outlined in the original consultation was endorsed. This model was the option most favoured by local authority representatives, but reservations were expressed by many of those representing third sector organisations.

Local authorities were keen to emphasise that they already fund a range of advice service providers. One local authority commented:

*"We already fund both bureau and our in-house team - we recognise that giving people a choice of provider is critical."*

The view expressed by third sector providers sometimes depended on existing relationships.

*"I broadly agree [that this model would have merits] but this is only because of our existing positive relationship with our local authority - which is not necessarily replicated across the country".*

Given the extent to which local authorities fund third sector advice agencies, it would appear that the effectiveness of individual local partnerships cannot be solely related to funding arrangements. It is intended to explore partnership working in the tests of change currently being undertaken and evaluated.<sup>18</sup> Several third sector representatives were concerned that any additional funding awarded to local authorities might be used to reduce existing grants that councils themselves fund.

*"Advice funding might be cut, so there needs to be criteria that proves it is adding to current resources or filling a gap."*

Previous issues that had been highlighted in relation to ringfencing were raised again by all sectors.

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0028/17965/Progress-report-Test-of-Change-funding-model-May-2020.pdf](https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0028/17965/Progress-report-Test-of-Change-funding-model-May-2020.pdf)

It was generally accepted that if local authorities were given debt levy funding, any process by which they dispersed such funds needed to be fair and transparent. Unease was expressed in relation to ensuring both the consistency and quality of advice services which received funding. It was proposed that funding should be widely available but subject to providers meeting certain standards.

*“ Any allocation of funding requires an open transparent process which can only be accessed by qualified providers.”*

Those representing the independent advice sector, particularly agencies offering specialist services, were concerned about this approach which they suggested might exclude them as any funds would only be used to support in-house services or Citizens Advice Bureau (CABx).

*“Direct grants are not the best way as smaller independents don’t really get a big say and most funding goes to CABx or bigger local authority projects.”*

## (ii) Grants programme managed by an independent organisation



*Funding could be awarded through an existing independent body which would make grants to appropriate organisations in line with agreed governance arrangements. These could cover such areas as eligibility, meeting funder priorities, supporting defined user outcomes, grant management and reporting requirements. This model currently operates in relation to the levy funding distributed by the Scottish Legal Aid Board.*

*A single independent body which disseminated funds was generally accepted by the majority of participants across all sectors. The current funding model managed by the Scottish Legal Aid Board was viewed positively but it was suggested that there were areas that could be improved, such as a greater emphasis on avoiding duplication, reducing what were seen as overly burdensome reporting requirements, promoting collaboration at a local level and ensuring equity of opportunity.*

As this is the current model through which c.40%<sup>19</sup> of the debt levy funding is distributed, there was a widespread acceptance that it offered an effective way of distributing funding. Whilst seen as a ‘familiar model’, it was suggested that changes in the way future programmes should be delivered were required.

Generally, those organisations which had received funding preferred a continuation of the current model in which grants are distributed by the Scottish Legal Aid Board (SLAB) but suggested some adjustments. It was felt that the reporting requirements should be simplified as they were seen by many to be overly bureaucratic and that the length of time for which grants were awarded should be extended to at least three years.

*“Principles of SLAB funding are sound and historically it delivers”*

*“SLAB is a familiar model. It is independent and more cost effective than setting up a new body”*

*“Grants need to be long-term to be effective”*

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/levy-funding-allocated-by-scottish-government-for-april-to-september-2019-2/>

*“The application process and grant reporting requirements need to be simplified – they are far too complex”*

Those organisations which had never received funding through the SLAB administered programme were more likely to suggest a different approach. They advocated that funding opportunities should be more transparent and that the selection of a body to administer grants should be based on an open competition.

*“Good idea as long as there is consultation with all sectors and practices adopted are transparent”*

*“Grant funding needs to be an open programme with a fixed end date which supports a range of providers*

*“There is a need for independent accountability and scrutiny so that funds do not favour known organisations”*

There were also proposals that the funding should be used to deliver activities linked to earlier intervention and improving financial capability which, in the long run, would lead to a reduction in the need for debt advice.

*“Any grants programme needs to be more flexible and cover a range of supports”*

There was concern across all sectors that the current grant programme seemed to operate in isolation and did not always appear to relate to other relevant publicly funded activities. It was also suggested that the current approach did not encourage partnership working and co-operation between organisations but instead resulted in competition for funding that was not always necessarily healthy.

*“Puts agencies at odds with each other rather than working in partnership”*

*“There’s a lack of overall co-ordination and reflection on what’s working”*

As this model was identified in the interim report as being suitable for immediate implementation it was felt that it would be appropriate to seek comments from SLAB.

*“SLAB manages Grant Funding programmes on behalf of others. In recent years SLAB has managed funding on behalf of the Scottish Government and the Money Advice Service up to the devolution of debt levy funding to Scotland in January 2019. Funders specify the priority for SLAB funding and the timescale for which funding is available. The last open funding round was for the Tackling Money Worries Programme in 2014. This programme included a focus on providing help for families by focusing on early intervention for debt problems and helping families improve financial capability.*

*SLAB has not had an opportunity since 2014 to fund new programmes and priorities. Grant funding has been available to a range of providers who deliver free debt advice, including Citizens Advice Bureau, Local Authorities, independent advice agencies and Law Centres. When seeking bids for funding, SLAB’s encouraged applications from appropriate partnerships where additional benefit can be demonstrated through a combined bid. In recent years a number of grant funded projects have been continued annually on direction from Scottish Government. This has meant short-term funding cycles. However, we continue to support the priority*

*set out in the Funders Framework and the Tackling Problem Debt Group for the need for longer term funding. The decision in relation to the length of programme funding rests with Scottish Government.”*

### (iii) National body to oversee the funding of advice services



*This could take the form of a strategic group, with membership drawn from key stakeholders and those with relevant remits, experience and knowledge. In practice, such a group could focus on national oversight and coordination of advice services and might also take on responsibility for agreeing the allocation of public funding for debt advice.*

*No positive responses were received from any consultees across all sectors in relation to the creation of a new statutory body or consortium with a strategic overview. It was felt that such a group would lack local knowledge, reduce opportunities for partnership working and potentially increase duplication of funding.*

The findings from the interim report were confirmed and the overwhelming majority of those engaged were against the utilisation of this model. Similar reasons for rejection to those put forward in the initial consultation were offered. It was opined that such a body might become overly bureaucratic and would be unable to take account of local needs. Likewise, the additional administration costs of such a body might result in a reduction in the amount of funding that would be available for service delivery.

Organisations from all sectors suggested it would “*lead to longer decision-making when it comes to funding,*” “*be too removed from local issues*” and would be unable to “*distribute funding consistently and fairly.*”

A few participants from the third sector did suggest that it might have merit but the overwhelming majority of third sector representatives felt that this model would favour national organisations at the expense of smaller, community-based groups.

*“There is a risk of well-resourced third sector national bodies dominating at the expense of smaller local provision.”*

### (iv) Change/ Innovation Funds



*The Change / Innovation Fund (which brings together both approaches as a single model) is already being used in other policy areas such education, agriculture and climate change.*

*There was acceptance across all sectors that such approaches will be needed to transform services. However, a few individuals suggested that all service delivery should include improvement methodologies. The challenges arise in relation to trying innovative approaches and, at the same time, maintaining core services. Sustainability was viewed as particularly challenging and disinvestment in less effective services was not always easy or possible politically. There was also a feeling that change was too quick and there needed to be time set aside to implement and review before making final decisions as to the future direction.*

It was submitted that this type of funding could be useful but would operate most effectively if it formed an element in a more comprehensive package of funding. In line with the comments made in the engagement for the interim report, the apparent tension between seeking to sustain existing core services and, at the same time, adopting new service delivery models that would increase impact, was made clear. There appear to be divided opinions on the utility and purpose of change/innovation funding. A small minority of participants felt that the existing service delivery models are working well and changes (beyond additional funding) are not required. The majority of participants accept that service transformation can offer multiple benefits but, given the struggles they are experiencing to sustain existing services, don't have the capacity to fully consider potential improvements.

*“When there are reductions in investment levels, then it is challenging to maintain existing services, and this means that keeping a focus on improvement actions is lost”*

*“Must sit alongside other models and continue funding on things that work”*

*“It's more important to sustain existing services – we don't always need things to be new and innovative”*

*“We spend too much time reinventing advice delivery - it's limited”*

*“Must be additional funding”*

It was recommended that change/innovation funding had to have a clear purpose. The concepts it was used to test should be properly evaluated, and when they worked, the methodology should be shared and, where appropriate, replicated. It was opined that the Scottish Government, in partnership with others, has a critical role to play in ensuring that when potential improvements are identified as being effective, they are widely implemented. There is a need to identify a clear progression route from innovation to mainstream service delivery. This may require continued funding to embed the new approaches into core services and to change existing practices. Concerns were expressed that some organisations might apply for change / innovation funding by a limited repackaging of existing services that in reality does not actually represent genuine innovation.

*“We have ideas for innovation but, because we can't retain what we have, we can't really expand this”*

*“Funding needs to be targeted against change levers not new projects rebranding existing services”*

*“How many projects do display or evidence real change? Evaluation is vital and should consider replicability.”*

## (v) Community Advice Partnerships (CAP)



*The establishment of 32 Community Advice Partnerships, perhaps modelled on the approach taken in relation to Community Justice Partnerships, illustrates the potential for community planning-type arrangements to be expanded to incorporate policy areas that extend beyond strategic co-ordination.*

*It was recognised that potentially this funding model had much to offer in that it was outcomes focussed, aware of local needs and priorities and promoted partnership working. In some local authority areas, it would work extremely well, but in others where the Community Planning Partnerships (CPP) was not as well developed or in which money advice was not a priority, it may be less applicable.*

Whilst there was an acceptance that this approach could be useful, it attracted very limited support as a potential funding model. There was a recognition that CPPs have good knowledge of local needs and issues but that it would be difficult to ensure that the funding was spent consistently as each had different priorities, which didn't always include advice services.

*“Good at understanding local needs and knowledge of local organisations but not consistent across Scotland”*

*“Good local knowledge but our CPP lacks understanding of advice, which isn't one of its priorities”*

## (vi) Self-Assembling Regional Groups<sup>20</sup>



*Funding models based on regional bodies or self-assembling ‘regional’ approaches could focus on providing one or all of the following elements: providing an administrative and coordinating function for agreed priorities; sharing identified services or allocating funding within each region.*

*This model was generally well received in the statutory sector. It was felt that it could provide an interface for local and national interests. Offering economies of scale, it would allow local authorities to maximise funds. Increased partnership opportunities could be offered that did not currently exist. The approach could offer benefits to service users by removing artificial geographic boundaries.*

*There could be challenges in relation to defining what constitutes a region and, within individual regions, different local authorities may have different priorities. However, the principle of self-assembling regional partnerships applied to economic partnerships, alongside agreed governance systems, can go some way to helping overcome such concerns.*

*This model would be well suited to supporting changes in service provision that could be provided effectively at a regional level; e.g. telephony services.*

<sup>20</sup> The constituent councils forming such groups would do so on the basis of agreement in relation to the geographic boundaries that would define the group.



There was support across all sectors for this model and general agreement that it could deliver a range of benefits. However, support from third sector participants was conditional on their involvement in any grouping that was established. Several representatives of third sector organisations made it clearly known that debt and welfare advice services were provided by a number of organisations and were concerned that any potential third sector members could be drawn solely from a few well known or national organisations. It was suggested that, although challenging, an inclusive approach towards third sector participation which recognised the diversity of the sector should be adopted. Particular mechanisms for achieving this were not identified.

*“There needs to be third sector involvement”*

*“Third sector has multiple agencies not just CABx”*

Clarity of purpose, shared understanding and a common approach were considered to be prerequisites in any successful partnership. There was a recognition that developing partnerships might take time and effort. Whilst it was necessary to have one co-ordinating organisation, there should be parity amongst members. Establishing regional groups is challenging, particularly if members of the group have different priorities, and requires local accountability and a degree of variation.

*“Can be difficult to get people together - takes time and energy as it’s not a natural behaviour”*

*“Concerns about accountability to local community”*

*“Needs clear terms of reference to keep it manageable”*

*“Challenges with different organisations having different priorities/processes”*

It was suggested that other regional models that worked effectively should be examined and the way they operated to facilitate partnership working identified.

*“There are existing models in which this approach works and offers benefits”*

*“In the Forth Valley, Macmillan Money Matters works across three local authorities but with a specific lead”.*

*“Existing work is already taking place and offers best practice that can be built on”*

*“Generally favourable but should align with existing structures and learn from examples that are working”*

Regional groups could jointly deliver some services, for example, triage arrangements, IT, case management systems and telephony were suggested, it was also acknowledged that some services (e.g. training) are best delivered on a national basis and this should be reflected in any funding arrangements.

*“Clear focus on working together with IT support, capacity-building, sharing learning and openness”*

*“There is scope for some services to be supported nationally e.g. work at Glasgow Children’s Hospital”*

(vii) 'Advice Services Partnership Framework' between Scottish and Local Governments



*The model is based on the creation of a Partnership Framework for Advice Services, drawing on the approach taken in relation to Employability.*

*This approach had significant support from public sector participants, many of whom were familiar with it, but less from other organisations possibly because they were unaware of it. It was seen as being able to offer local subsidiarity and autonomy at the same time as providing national co-ordination and support and it was felt it provided the best compromise. The model offered many of the benefits of regional approaches in relation to cost effectiveness, removing geographic boundaries for service users and supporting an integrated approach to funding. Some concerns were expressed in relation to ensuring there was parity between national and local actors, and it was suggested there was a need to include some process for resolving any issues on which agreement could not be reached.*

This model was generally accepted, although a very small minority suggested it could be too prescriptive and might dilute the impact of debt levy funding. The most effective means to achieve this model would be to have an overarching national partnership agreement underpinned by local implementation strategies or plans. In this way, a strategic framework could be set, which could be adapted and implemented at a local level to take account of local needs and priorities. As well as the approach taken in relation to developing the Employability Partnership Framework, the methods adopted in the rapid re-housing strategy<sup>21</sup> should also be considered.

At a local level this model could potentially be aligned with self-assembling Regional Groups.

*"It might dilute the impact of levy funding and is too complicated"*

*"A national strategy to agree principles which is delivered locally"*

*"We need a joined-up approach, for consistent funding"*

It was advocated combining all the public investment in advice services would offer both better value and improved outcomes for service users. It was acknowledged that, to achieve this, there had to be a better understanding of both the amount and source of overall investment in money and welfare advice services.

*"There are common goals between local authorities and Scottish Government - it makes sense to work together and will improve decision-making and service delivery."*

*"Co-ordination is a key part of any agreement or framework"*

Representatives of third sector organisations which provide services stated very clearly that any partnership between funders should include representation from third sector providers. Different suggestions were put forward as to how this might be achieved, which included the identification of a neutral third sector 'champion', and representation from the Scottish Council

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2018/11/ending-homelessness-together-high-level-action-plan/documents/00543359-pdf/00543359-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/00543359.pdf>

for Voluntary Organisations. It was also submitted that it would be beneficial to include involvement from a wider range of organisations, such as the NHS, Department of Work and Pensions and Social Security Scotland.

*“Opportunity for large number of partners to be involved”*

*“3rd sector need to be included - it is essential”*

Regardless of the bodies included, it was recommended that the partnership have a shared agenda and a common language and that this might best be achieved through taking a developmental approach based on co-production. This could help overcome any challenges that might otherwise prevent the establishment of an effective partnership and would ensure that all views were considered of equal value.

*“Common language, partnership framework and regional groups all dovetail together”*

*“Co-production is needed to develop approach”*

*“Only works if partners have the same agenda and are equals”*

Some of the views expressed were heavily influenced by individual organisations’ experience of existing partnerships – this could be either positive or negative. Indeed, one third sector organisation which had a very good existing relationship with its local authority was concerned that this might be adversely affected.

*“In x we have a partnership, but with y, there are issues!”*

*“Could interfere with existing relationships x and others have with their council and could reduce funding”*

#### (viii) Missing Models

When asked to identify any additional funding models that could be used to disseminate debt levy funding two further options were put forward.

##### (a) an existing national body

There are a number of national bodies with an interest in money and welfare rights. The possibility of adopting this approach in relation to, firstly, identifying potential national bodies and, secondly, how the body might utilise the funding will be the subject of further research and engagement in 2020/21.

##### (b) Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCP)

HSCPs have a duty to contribute to reducing health inequalities as one of the National Health and Wellbeing outcomes.<sup>22</sup> However, as with Community Planning Partnerships, HSCPs are autonomous bodies and each has its own priorities, which may not necessarily include advice services. Accordingly, this suggested model will not be explored further at this stage. However, it should be noted that, in the next phase of the research, there will be more in-depth dialogue with health services and their contribution to advice services.

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22 <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0047/00470219.pdf>

## (b) Tests of Change

In the interim report, two possible models that could be tested and evaluated in 2020-21 were identified. These were 'Direct Grants to local authorities' and 'Change/Innovation Funds'. A separate report is available on the current position in relation to the former and, as a result of delays in the introduction of the SLAB funded grants programme, the latter has not yet commenced.

There was general agreement that the selected 'tests of change' were correct and worthy of exploration. Participants highlighted areas of concern and these will be considered and addressed in the evaluation process. Primarily these related to ensuring that service users needs were properly considered, taking account of geographical differences, and ensuring change/ innovation funds were used to test true innovation and properly consider sustainability and service transformation.

*"Models should be community-led and focus on service users"*

*"Some models would work in smaller councils/rural areas, but not in cities"*

*"Innovation funding is a good idea but there needs to be a balance with proven service delivery."*

*"Change/ innovation fund needs to have a next steps fund too"*

*"Test true innovation, not rebranded projects"*

## (c ) Assessment Criteria

In the interim report, generic criteria were identified against which all of the potential funding models could be assessed. Additional criteria, unique to each of the two tests of change, were also put forward. All the criteria are outlined below.

During the engagement sessions it was highlighted that, at this stage in the evaluation process, the criteria that have been identified are substantive and will require further detail and clarification. Whilst several comments were received which will assist with strengthening the definitions of the criteria and the assessment methodology, only one additional unique criterion was suggested which related to ensuring that, in any model adopted, levy funding was used to provide quality services. This additional criterion will be included in the generic criteria which are applicable to all potential funding models.

## Generic Criteria

### **Clarity of purpose**

The funding has a clear purpose and the activities it is used to deliver align with and contribute to the achievement of that purpose.

### **Reduce duplication**

Funding should not be used to duplicate existing activities. Where funding is used to contribute to activities that have more than one funding source, the elements which each support should be discrete and clearly identified.

### **Improve Impact of service user outcomes**

The expected service user outcomes are clearly identified and linked to appropriate stakeholder / priority groups.

### **Contribute to strategic outcomes**

There will be clear linkages to Scottish Government and Local Government strategic priorities, for example by reducing health inequalities, child poverty, other priority outcomes set out within the National Performance Framework and/or Local Outcomes Improvement Plans.

### **Increase reach and accessibility**

Explanations should be provided as to how the delivery model supported will improve engagement with the demographic or number of clients who use the service and improve the accessibility of the service. Where appropriate, this will include consideration of various 'hard to reach' or other priority groups.

### **Offer value for money**

Details should be included of ways in which the funding will complement existing debt and wider advice service provision and deliver good value for money when comparing the level of investment with the outcomes that will be achieved.

### **Promote joined-up working**

Any prospective funding model ought to facilitate collaboration and joined-up working across the publicly-funded advice sector.

### **Encourage earlier intervention**

The activities the funding is used to support should demonstrate how they will support earlier intervention.

### **Sustainability**

The project being delivered should be focused on activities that will deliver tangible and sustainable outcomes for service users. Sustainability of the overall activity beyond the initial funding period should also be considered.

The new criterion, based on the engagement findings, that will be added is:

### **Services provided are of high quality**

The organisation needs to ensure that the activities it provides are of a sufficiently high quality. The most obvious method by which this can be demonstrated is if the organisation is accredited by the Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers.<sup>23</sup>

Direct grants to local authorities

### **Evidence of political and operational leadership**

Participating local authorities can demonstrate that the initiative has political or operational support at a local level and are able to suggest ways, if successful, the approach can be sustained.

### **Clear governance arrangements are in place**

Evidence can be provided of how responsibility for managing and reporting the funding will be provided.

### **Development of a wider partnership involving relevant public sector and appropriate third sector stakeholders**

Evidence is provided that the purpose of the funding, the activities it supports and the potential impact it will create have been, or will be, discussed with other relevant public sector and third sector partners. The mechanism by which this will be achieved, *either through existing networks or the development of new ones will be described with particular reference as to how this will be achieved on a regional basis.*

## Criteria for projects testing 'change/innovation funds'

### **Innovation and Impact**

The proposed activities are distinct from those currently provided and will improve outcomes for priority groups of service users. Supporting evidence of why this approach might work is offered. In particular, the nature of the innovation will be described clearly and how the proposed approach will add value – for example, this may include widening reach, improving VfM, integrating more client-centred approaches, achieving more sustainable outcomes, etc.

### **Relationship to core funding**

The additional funding relates to, and complements, existing funding.

### **Sustainability**

The activities from the funding, if it is evidenced that they are successful, will be sustained without additional resource. For example, this might involve a change in service delivery model.

### **Scalability**

The potential for the small-scale intervention that is funded can be replicated or scaled up on a regional or national basis.

## (d) Ranking of Criteria

It had been intended to use a ranking system to identify the importance that should be attached to each of the assessment criteria. To identify participants' views, a rudimentary process was used in which those attending were asked to vote for the criteria which they thought were most relevant.

Whilst acknowledging the limitations of this methodology, it was considered that some general areas of broad agreement might be reached. However, it was not possible to identify any areas of unanimity or even majority agreement, other than the desirability for long-term funding commitments. The fact that, at this stage, the criteria are not fully developed and defined may have contributed to this. As part of the continued evaluation process, it would be intended to have a further session with a cross sector group at which a more detailed discussion about the relative importance that should be attached to each of the criteria will take place.

Whilst it did not result in an agreed ranking for each of the evaluation criteria, there were some interesting findings arising from the engagement process.

Third sector representatives expressed concerns about 'reduce duplication' being an assessment criterion. Their justification for this was that duplication of funding was acceptable if there was demand for a service. Funders took a very different view and were concerned that two funders could potentially, and without agreement, both be paying for the same service. This they considered to be double-funding or duplication.

'Value for money' did not appear as one of the highest priorities for either funders or providers.

The only group in which 'Improve impact of service user outcomes' was one of the highest priorities was the one involving health service funders and providers.

Given the lack of consensus in relation to most of the criteria, the results of the ranking exercise are not considered to be useful and are, therefore, not included in this report.

## (e) Other areas highlighted in the engagement process

As has been explained, whilst the engagement sessions were held primarily to get the views of a wide range of organisations on the findings and recommendations in the interim report, it was felt important to allow participants to express views on other issues that they thought should be taken into account and which might help or hinder the provision of money and welfare rights advice.

The biggest challenge to the continuation of advice services is seen as a lack of funding and the short time periods for which funding is typically provided. This results in uncertainty and difficulties planning services and retaining skilled staff. The most common concern expressed by many across all sectors was,

*"we need long-term stable funding to sustain services effectively and retain skilled staff."*

It was advocated by some that this might be addressed by placing the service on the same statutory footing as other key services, such as education and social work. However, it was also pointed out that many statutory services had experienced significant funding cuts in recent years, so the statutory definition did not necessarily guarantee sustained funding.

It was suggested that there was a lack of awareness of the purpose of money and welfare rights services. Indeed, participants themselves had different views as to its function and potential beneficiaries. Varying views were put forward as to whether it should be a universal service or be targeted at those most likely to require assistance. The majority who responded felt that services should “focus on challenging poverty”, but there was also recognition that other factors might be relevant, such as geography and the needs of particular groups.

*“Recognition of niche services which provide a more holistic approach”*

*“Deprivation and rurality need equal acknowledgement when allocating funding”*

Focusing purely on debt advice after individuals had got into difficulty was seen as a missed opportunity and more activities should be funded to prevent the problems occurring.

*“Early intervention – offering advice to communities to assist in managing money to prevent debt”*

Developing national and local advice strategies were identified as potential mechanisms that would contribute to defining and developing the purpose of money and welfare rights services.

The connection between early access to advice and improved health and wellbeing were emphasised by many. It was suggested that links between health and advice services should be further strengthened.

*“Recognising the role advice services can play in improving health and wellbeing”*

*“NHS taking greater responsibility for advice funding to reduce health inequalities”*

*“A recognition that health inequalities in Scotland are rising due to austerity. Social Welfare advice embedded in NHS services can help tackle these inequalities”*

Some disquiet was expressed, particularly by funders, that decisions about advice services were frequently not based on evidence but on political preferences. It was felt important that the evidence base was strengthened across a number of areas.

Advice service provision across the country varies both in terms of quality and quantity. Whilst acknowledging the need for local decision-making, it was proposed that certain minimum standards should be agreed.

Several participants stressed the need to identify what services were currently provided, where they were located and who was funding them. In partnership with other organisations, the IS is currently undertaking this exercise. Given the complexities and variety of funding arrangements, this is not a straightforward task.

*“Need for evidence and to identify what exists to ensure that all have access to a minimum standard of advice. There are gaps in provision and variable quality across Scotland.”*

*“How do we know which areas need the most support? Is it based on levels of debt or health impacts? Amount of debt not always a reflection of need”*

*“Be specific- let evidence highlight which group needs it most – pregnancy/ birth are optimum times to increase benefits”*



*“In terms of making decisions about future service delivery, on many occasions organisations, particularly those in the third sector, did not appear to put service user needs and views at the centre of planning services.”*

*“Listen more closely to advice agencies - we know what it is all about”*

*“All too often, decisions are made on what suits organisations best and not the people who need the services”*

Finally, participants were asked to record any general comments. A selection is offered below which demonstrates the diversity of opinion that exists in the sector and illustrates why achieving consensus will be challenging.

Fig.2. General Comments from participants



# The findings from engagement with actual and potential service users

Ensuring that the activities it supports meets user needs and expectations is an essential aspect of the potential use of debt levy funding. Although there have been various consultation exercises nationally<sup>24</sup> the voices of potential or actual service users have not usually featured. This omission has been recognised and in its ‘Tackling problem debt advice: route map’<sup>25</sup> the Scottish Government pledged to gather, “*a diverse range of views to represent the population of Scotland, including those who may not traditionally engage with advice services.*”

To understand the debt levy funding model that would best meet user needs and expectations, it is necessary to have a better comprehension of what actual and potential users of money and welfare rights advice want. Ultimately, it is hoped service users will be “*supported and empowered to actively participate in the definition, design and delivery of advice services*”.<sup>26</sup> At this preliminary stage, all that is being sought is a better understanding of the views of actual and potential users of money and welfare rights advice services. To ensure that the opinions offered were as representative as possible, it was felt that it would be better not to use any current advice providers as intermediaries. Whilst, in previous engagement activities, advice providers have been extremely helpful in facilitating the participation of service users, on this occasion it was felt that it may be counter-productive. Anonymous views were sought in relation to the wider aspects of advice provision and not in relation to the service provided by any particular provider. In this way, it was hoped that, as far as possible, bias would be avoided.

To gain access to a representative sample of Scotland’s people, it was decided to commission a survey from Survation, an independent market research and polling organisation, which was carried out between 6th - 9th March 2020.

Information was conducted from an online panel using data weighted to the profile of all Scottish adults aged over 16, by age, sex, etc.<sup>27</sup>

The purpose of the survey was to identify the views of individuals in relation to the following:

- expectations of advice
- preferred channel or access route for advice – both initially and on an ongoing basis
- favoured location to access face-to-face services
- characteristics that are considered important in advice providers
- preferred skills of advice workers

As this survey was conducted using an online platform, which might have excluded some

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24 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/review-publicly-funded-advice-services-scotland/>

25 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/debt-advice-routemap-scotland/>

26 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/the-scottish-approach-to-service-design/>

27 Using information from the Office of National Statistics

individuals, it was decided to complement it by mapping customer journeys<sup>28</sup> with actual or potential users of advice services on a face-to-face basis. Whilst it had been intended to carry out 30 such interviews, following the measures required as a result of COVID-19, two of the independent projects supporting the sessions had to close temporarily. As a result, ten interviews took place on a one-to-one basis and a further eight took place by telephone.)

## (1) Results from Online Survey

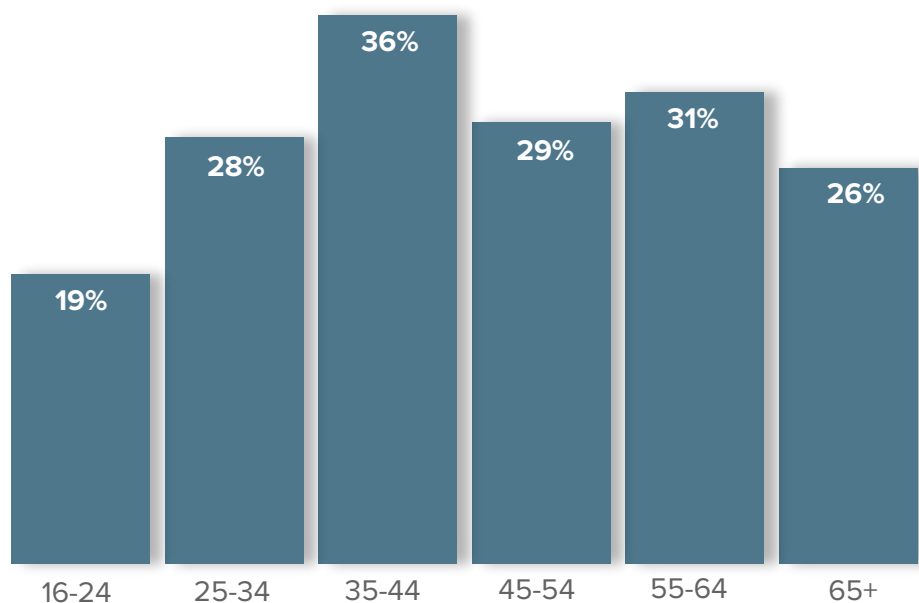
Because only a sample of the total population was interviewed, all results are subject to a margin of error which means that not all differences are statistically significant.

For example, in a question where 50% (the worst case scenario as far as margin of error is concerned) gave a particular answer, with a sample of 1012 it is 95% certain that the 'true' value will fall within the range of 3.1% from the sample result. However, the margin of error is much greater as the number in the sample size falls. In interpreting the data, this is significant when the analysis considers the views expressed based on different characteristics such as age or household composition. The numbers in these subsets are very much smaller and comment will be made on differences within these smaller subsets when there is sufficient evidence that it could be statistically important.

Of all those who responded, 28% were willing to state that they had previously used an advice service. It should be stressed that advice was defined in this context as that which related to money or welfare rights advice and participants were asked to respond on that basis.

Key demographic information about the characteristics of the numbers interviewed, which aligns to the Scottish population, is described in the figures below.

Fig.3 Age profile of respondents



28 <https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/business-analysis-framework/analyse-needs/customer-journey-mapping>

Fig.4 Household income of respondents

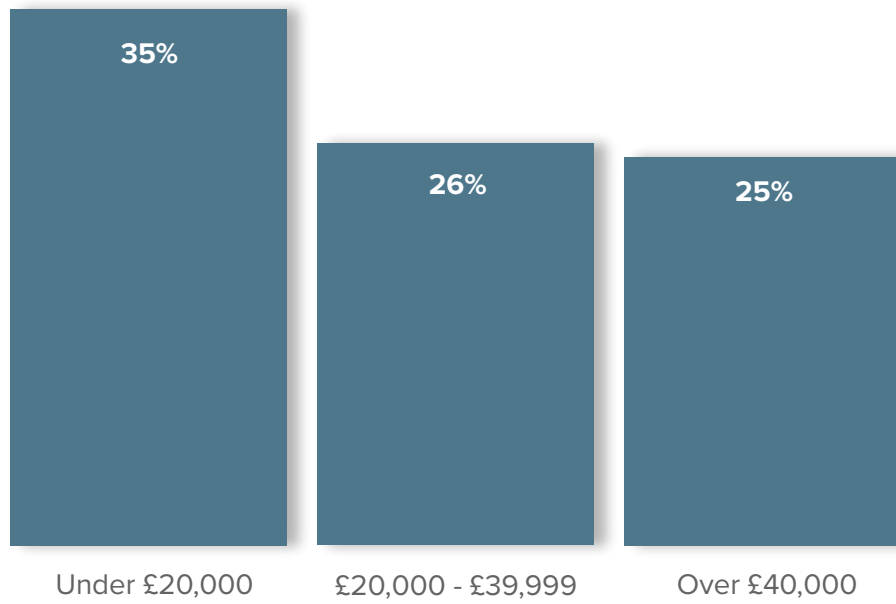
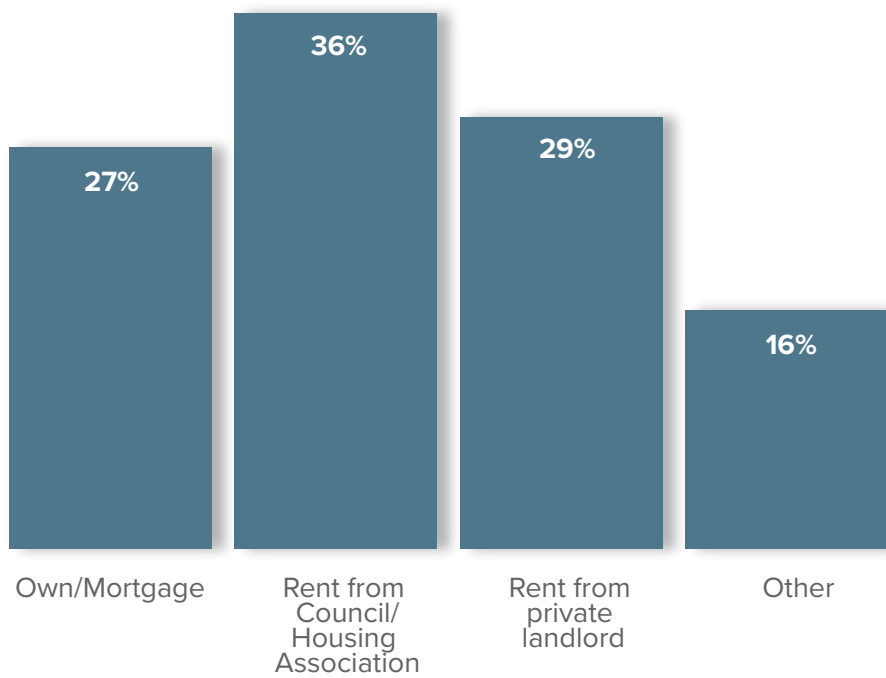


Fig.5 Accomodation type occupied by respondents



### (i) Expectations of advice

To seek to establish the expectation of individuals who had never previously used advice services, and the experiences of those who had, each group was asked the following questions:

- For individuals who had never previously used advice services: *'Advice agencies provide some or all of the following types of help. What types of help do you think an advice agency should provide? Please select all that apply.'*

- For individuals who declared that they had previous experience of advice services:  
*‘Thinking about the most recent time you used an advice service, which of the following, if any, resulted from your contact with them? Please select all that apply.’*

The results are displayed in the table below. It should be noted that the majority of statements provided to each group are not exactly the same (in order to make the statements relevant and meaningful to each group, this was not possible). However, it can be generally concluded that the expectations of what can be offered by advice services are much higher in those who have never used advice services when compared to those that have. This is particularly the case in ‘identifying and solving the problem for which advice was sought’ and ‘preventing it happening again’. Whilst only 7% of those individuals who had used advice services reported that accessing an advice service had prevented the problem happening again, over 37% of those who had never used advice services thought that it would. This would suggest that despite expectations, for almost one in ten users of advice services, accessing advice alone did not offer a preventative approach. It is intended to explore the reasons for this further in phase two of the research.

Of those individuals who had used advice services, 20% suggested that managing their problem was easier and a little under a third stated that their problem had been solved, with a further 29% stating that they had received assistance to find a solution to their problem. These are positive results and it is a little surprising how high the expectations appear to be of individuals who have never accessed advice services.

Fig.6 Respondents' expectations of advice agencies

Experience of individuals who had previously used advice services	% responding positively	% responding positively	Expectation of individuals who had never used advice services
Information was provided directly by the advice service	30%	45%	Tell people their options so they can deal with the problem(s) themselves
Problems were identified	14%	56%	Support people to understand and deal with the problem(s) themselves
Solutions were directly offered by the advice service	25%	52%	Help people to negotiate a solution to the problem(s) with a third party (e.g. DWP / Creditors) on the person's behalf
Assistance was given to find a solution to the problem(s)	29%	44%	Represent people at tribunals and courts about the problem(s) if necessary
Managing the problem was easier	20%	50%	Refer people to other organisations who can help them to deal with the problem(s)
The problem was solved*	32%	59%	Work alongside people to help them solve the problem(s)
The problem was prevented from happening again*	7%	37%	Prevent the problem happening again
Nothing resulted from my contact with the advice service	8%	13%	Don't know

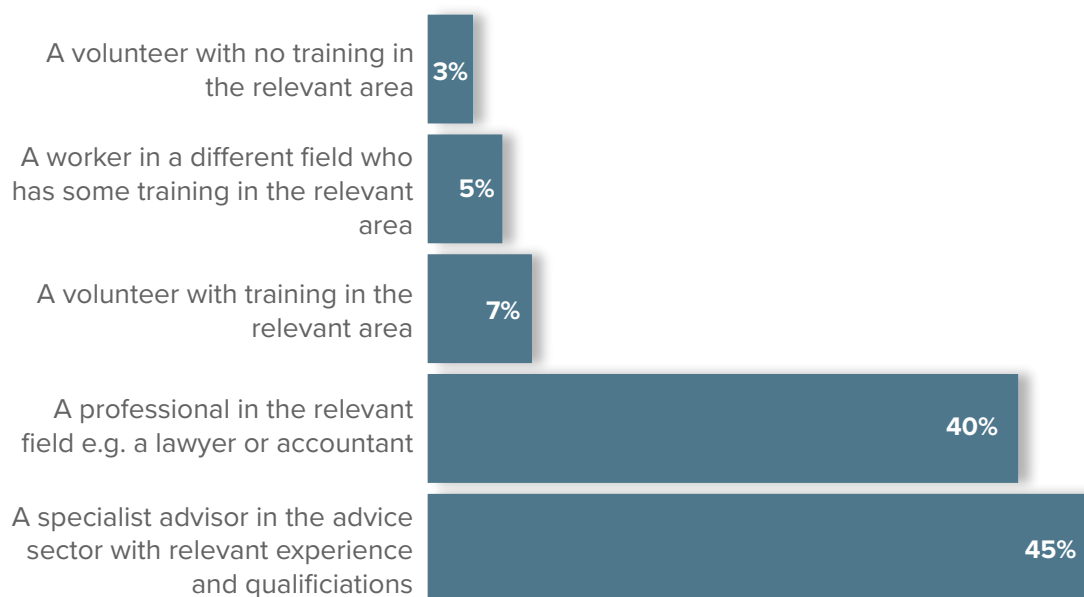
\*A direct comparison between the responses from each group is possible

## (ii) Preferred skills of advice providers.

To identify the skills that it was felt an advisor should possess, participants were asked the following question: 'If you were to contact an advice service, which of the following would you prefer to receive advice from? Please rank in order from most preferred to least preferred.'

The most popular option was a specialist advisor with relevant experience and qualifications (45%), which was preferred to getting money and welfare rights advice from professionals such as lawyers and accountants (40%). Volunteer advisors and workers in different areas, even when trained, were not ranked highly. There was no difference in the preferences expressed between those who had never used advice services and those who had.

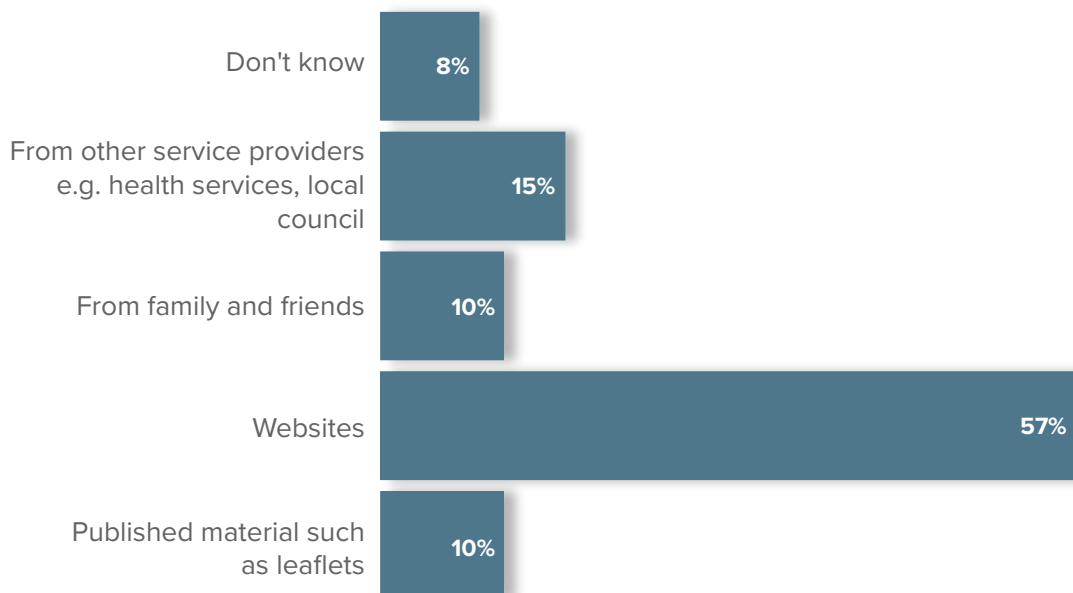
Fig. 7 Respondents' preferred skills in advice providers



### (iii) Engagement with advice services

To identify how they wished to find information about what advice services could offer, participants were asked the following question: 'If you were planning on contacting an advice service, how would you prefer to find out more information about the services on offer?'

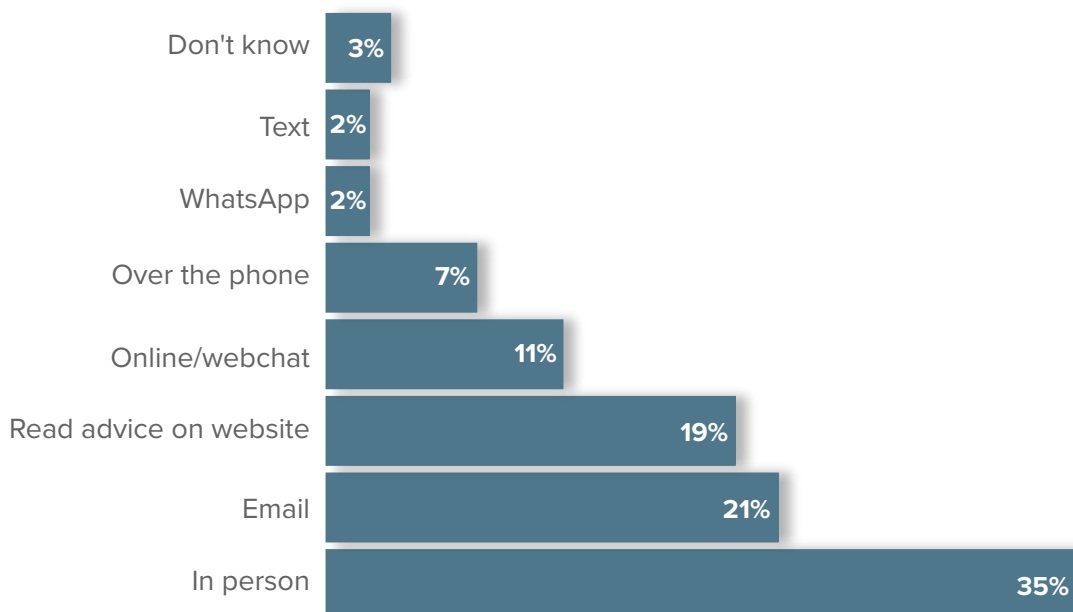
Fig.8 Respondents' preferred way to get information about advice services



The preferred option, for both those who had used advice services and those who hadn't, was getting basic information from a website. Interestingly, information on printed materials proved significantly less popular. Individuals with previous experience of getting advice were marginally more likely to use a website in the first instance than those who had never accessed advice. In contrast the group more likely to favour getting information from other providers, was that which had never previously accessed advice.

Having secured information, participants were asked: ‘How would you prefer to actually receive the advice initially?’

Fig.9 Respondents preferred way to get advice initially



A little over one-third preferred to receive initial advice from the service in person at a face-to-face interview. However, two-thirds of respondents preferred to get advice remotely, and a little under a fifth did not actually want to engage directly with the service but wanted to use a website for independent research. There was no appreciable difference between those who had previously used advice services and those who had not.

In relation to follow-up advice, the numbers preferring face-to-face services remained similar but there was a marked increase in numbers who switched to phone contact and a reduction in those deciding to self-serve.

Fig 10 Respondents’ preferred route to get follow-up advice

	Follow up	Initial advice
In person	36%	35%
Email	24%	21%
Over the phone	19%	7%
Online/webchat	9%	11%
Read advice on website	4%	19%
WhatsApp	3%	2%
Text	2%	2%
Don't know	3%	3%

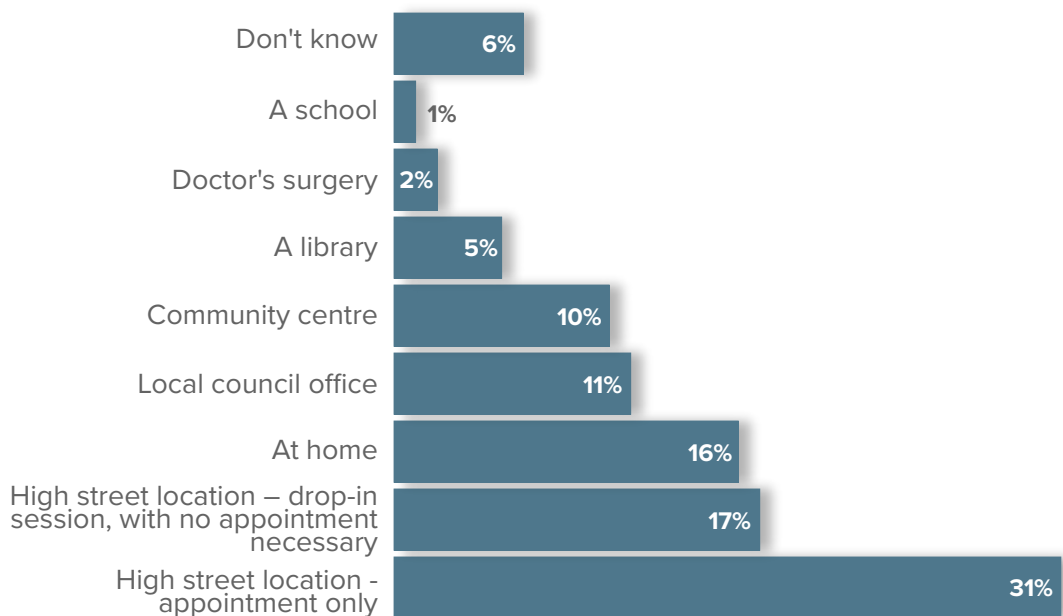
In general terms, when considering particular demographic groups, people aged over 65 were twice as likely to prefer receiving advice face-to-face as those aged under 44. Young



people aged under 25 expressed a significant preference for text messaging compared to other age groups.

Those individuals who expressed a preference for face-to-face services were asked where such services should be provided: 'You said you would prefer to receive advice in person. Where would be your ideal location to receive advice?'

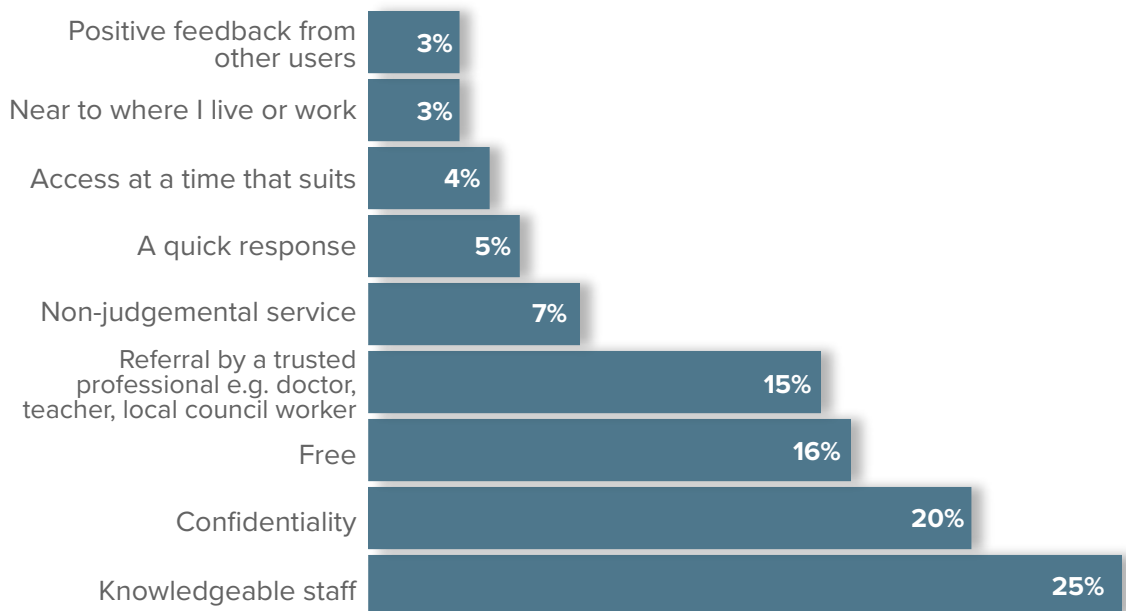
Fig.11 Respondents' preferred location to receive face to face advice



The favoured option for accessing face-to-face services was through an appointment at a High Street location, which secured almost twice as many positive responses as a drop-in session. Home visits were the more likely to be the preferred choice of over 55s who were also less likely to wish to use community centres.

To identify what characteristics would encourage individuals to use advice services. they were asked: 'If you were seeking advice from an advice service, which of the following would be most important to you? Please rank in order from most important to least important.'

Fig.12 The features of advice services that respondents consider important



Having knowledgeable staff was rated by all individuals, regardless of demography or previous use, as being the most influential factor in deciding to use an advice service. When considering this in conjunction with the preferences expressed in relation to the optimal skills set of staff providing advice, it is clear that confidence in advice services is directly related to the capabilities and competencies of staff specialising in providing money and welfare rights advice. The importance of this is recognised in Money Advice Scotland's report 'Adviser Perspectives on a Workforce Strategy',<sup>29</sup> which seeks to identify how to retain experience and expertise within the free advice sector. Over one-fifth of individuals said that confidentiality would influence their decision as to whether or not to use a service. Interestingly, this was believed to be of greater importance than the service being free. In terms of which recommendations to follow, those from a trusted professional were considered to be three times more influential than positive feedback from other users.

## (2) Results from Customer Journey Mapping

Customer journeys were mapped out for eighteen individuals and the results are presented in the summarised customer journey maps below. The maps also record some of the thoughts and feelings that were expressed. Individuals who had previous experience of using advice services were identified by organisations that were not associated with the provision of money and welfare rights advice. Although the number of interviews that took place was

small, it was possible to segment the majority of the service user interviews into four main self-determined groups:

- Black and minority ethnic
- People aged over 65
- Single parents
- Individuals with disabilities/special needs

The key journey steps and touch points in each individual's journey were explored through open discussion. The following key journey steps were identified and formed the basis of each conversation:

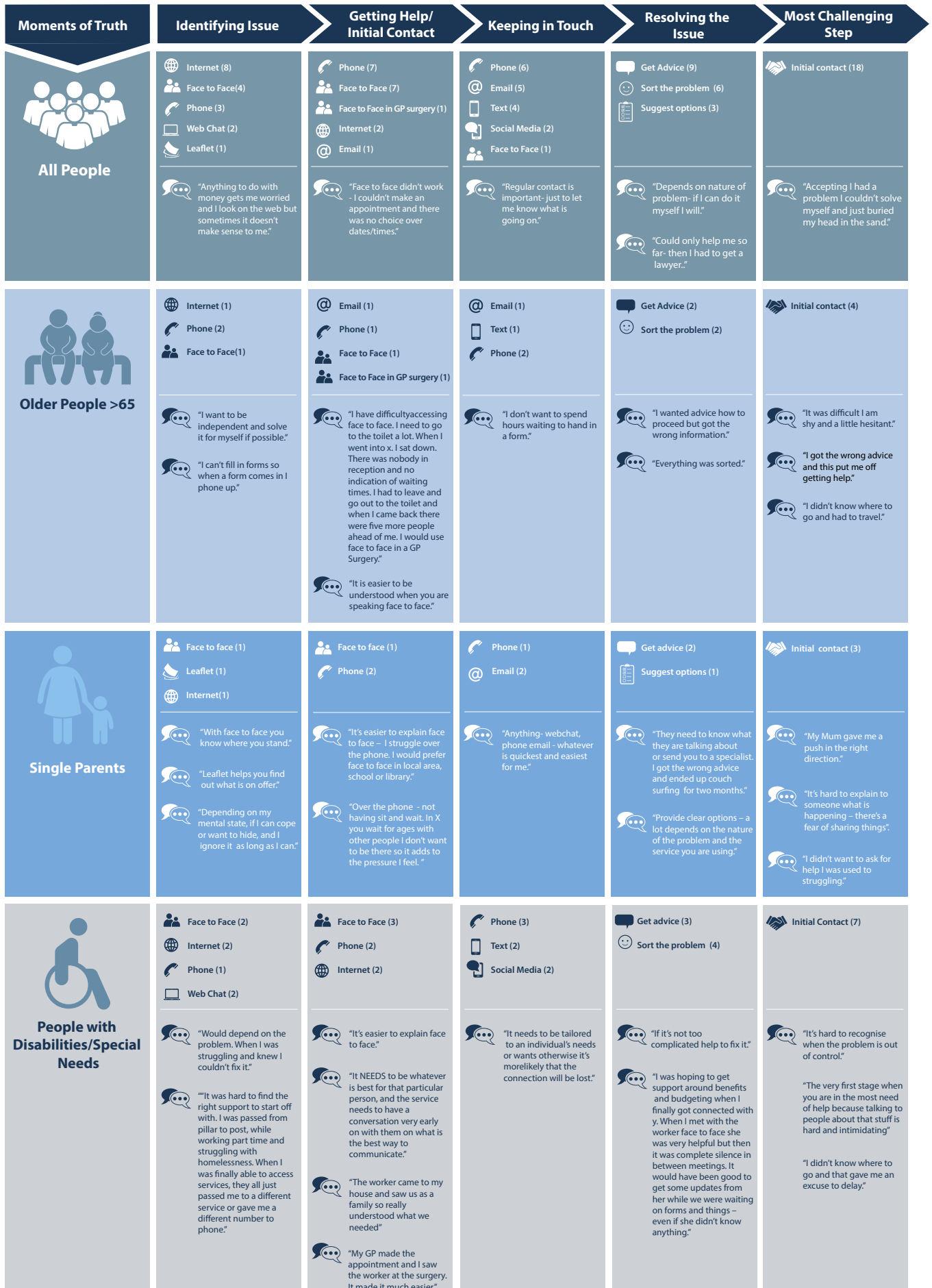
- Identifying Issue
- Getting Help/ Initial Contact
- Keeping in Touch
- Resolving the Issue

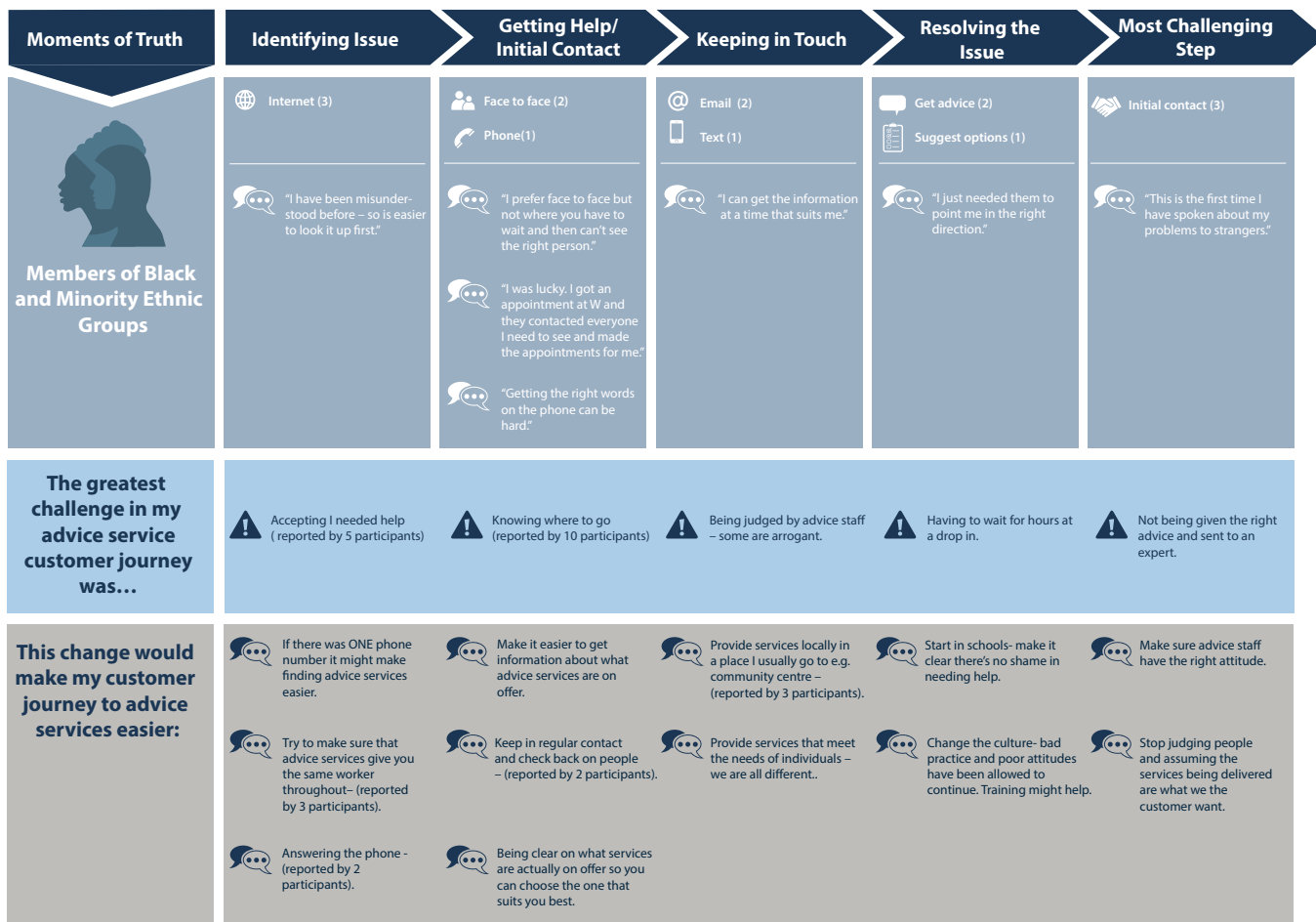
Individuals were also asked to identify which step in the journey they found most challenging – and why this was the case.

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29 <https://www.moneyadvicescotland.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=49de5b0e-a3ab-4d05-9c0d-80882087e118>

Fig 13 Customer Journey Maps





Surprisingly, there were broad similarities between all the customer journeys that were described. Assumptions are often made that individuals who are older, or have mental health issues, have a strong preference for face-to-face access to advice services. However, in this analysis, although the number of participants was small, such assumptions are not supported by direct evidence.

In relation to 'identifying the issue', a digital method of accessing information, whether going online or using web chat, was the preferred option. However, when it came to actually making 'initial contact' to seek advice, face-to-face was the preferred option - although it was only marginally ahead of making contact by phone. In relation to 'maintaining contact', phone and email were preferred communication routes and face-to-face was the least popular.

The combined customer journey maps suggest that, across all sections of the community, there is a willingness to use different digital routes to access advice and services need to respond on this basis. The marginal preference for 'face-to-face' access to advice is most relevant when initial contact is made.

All participants reported that the hardest step in their journey was making the initial contact and accepting that they needed help.

*"The very first stage when you are in the most need of help because talking to people about that stuff is hard and intimidating."*

Not surprisingly, the second greatest challenge in the customer journey was 'accepting I needed help'. However, overwhelmingly the biggest challenge, was actually knowing where to go for help. Many of those interviewed reported difficulties in getting information about the

advice services on offer and, when they did, some had difficulties accessing them or found that their expectations of the service that was available were not met.

Individuals were asked to identify one change that 'would make my customer journey to advice services easier'. The suggestions for service improvements were in the main very simple and practical and most should be eminently achievable. This process demonstrates the value of enabling service users to voice their opinions in a structured way that focuses on their experiences.

*"If there was ONE phone number it might make finding advice services easier."*

*"Make it easier to get information about what advice services are on offer."*

*"Provide services locally in a place I usually go to e.g. community centre" (reported by three participants).*

*"Make sure advice staff have the right attitude."*

*"Try to make sure that advice services give you the same worker throughout" (reported by three participants).*

*"Keep in regular contact and check back on people" (reported by two participants).*

*"Provide services that meet the needs of individuals – we are all different."*

*"Answer the phone!" (reported by two participants).*

*"Be clear on what services are actually on offer so people can choose the one that suits them best."*

# Conclusions and Recommendations

From the outset, it was stated that the results of the engagement process would be used to inform the next phase of research and evaluation around the various debt levy funding models set out in the interim report.

**There was broad agreement with the recommendations in the interim report and hence the suggested actions in the interim report will continue but will be adjusted to reflect the views expressed in the second phase.**

It is recommended that the following additional actions be taken :

- a generic criterion measuring quality will be included and will be used in the evaluation process
- additional research will be carried out on a potential funding model that involves giving debt levy funding to a single organisation
- there will be a focus on the preferred funding approach based on agreeing an overarching national partnership agreement underpinned by local agreements. In this way, a strategic framework could be established which could be adopted and implemented at a local level to take account of local needs and priorities. The establishment of local agreements could potentially be aligned with self-assembling regional groups
- a consideration of how the use of debt levy funding could also support activities which result in early intervention and prevention
- identification of potential partnership opportunities with health services

The following activities will continue:

- a Scotland-wide mapping exercise which identifies the location, service delivery model and funding source of money and welfare rights advice service in each local authority area
- ongoing evaluation of the two identified tests of change
- the production of detailed descriptors for each funding model that it has been agreed will be explored further – including the potential for use of more than one model

Engagement will be an essential ongoing element and, as well as an opportunity to comment directly on the findings in this report, is likely to include:

- greater use of the k-hub group
- establishing small cross-sector panels to consider identified issues in more depth (i.e. partnerships with health, digital access routes to advice and ranking of the assessment criteria against which the identified funding models will be evaluated)
- mapping additional customer journeys to ensure that the views of service users are properly considered

- regular webinars and events to feedback on research/evaluation findings and to enable interested parties to contribute on an ongoing basis

In conclusion, at the core of advice services are building and sustaining trusting and effective relationships be they between advisor and service user, funder and provider, the public and third sector or indeed even within the third sector. In the engagement process, it became very clear that many relationships were not working well and that this is perhaps one of the greatest challenges facing the sector.

To discuss further contact:

[karen.carrick@improvementservice.org.uk](mailto:karen.carrick@improvementservice.org.uk)

# Appendix 1: Consultees

The IS is grateful to individuals from the following organisations which participated in the engagement process.

## Public Sector Organisations

Aberdeen City Council

Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP)

Aberdeenshire Council

Angus Council

Clackmannanshire Council

Dundee City Council

East Renfrewshire Council

Edinburgh City Council

Edinburgh HSCP

Falkirk Council

Fife Council

Glasgow City Council

Glasgow City HSCP

Stirling Council

Highland Council

Inverclyde Council

Midlothian Council

Moray Council

North Ayrshire Council

NHS Borders

NHS Fife

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde

NHS Lanarkshire

NHS Lothian

Scottish Public Health Network

NHS Tayside

Renfrewshire Council

Scottish Borders Council

Scottish Government

Scottish Legal Aid Board

South Ayrshire Council

South Lanarkshire Council

Stirling Council

West Dunbartonshire Council

West Lothian Council



## Third /Quasi Third Sector Organisations

Aberdeen Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)  
Airdrie CAB  
Argyll & Bute CAB  
Castlemilk Law Centre  
Community Health Advice Initiative  
Children First  
Citizens Advice Scotland  
Citizens Advice and Rights Fife  
Community Food Initiatives North East Aberdeen  
Dalkeith & District CAB  
Ditch Debt with Dignity  
Discovery Credit Union  
Drumchapel Money Advice Centre  
Fair Advice Ltd  
Financial Fitness  
Glasgow East Money Advice Project (GEMAP)  
Gordon Rural  
Govan Housing Association  
Govan Law Centre  
Grampian Housing Association  
Haddington CAB  
Money Advice Scotland  
Money Matters  
Motherwell CAB  
Musselburgh CAB  
One Parent Families Scotland  
Paisley CAB  
Parkhead CAB  
Perth CAB  
Port of Leith Housing Association  
Queens Cross Housing Association  
Salvation Army  
Save Cash and Reduce Fuel (SCARF Aberdeen)  
Scottish Federation of Housing Associations  
Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations  
Shelter Scotland  
Southside Housing Association  
South West Aberdeenshire CAB  
StepChange Scotland  
Stirling Advice Partnership  
Stirling CAB

Tackling Household Affordable Warmth Orkney  
The Action Group  
The Chartered Trading Standards Institute  
Wheatley 360  
Whitelinch & Scotstoun Housing Association

## Other

Advice UK  
Deep End GPs  
Money and Pensions Service

Improvement Service  
iHub  
Quarrywood Court  
Livingston  
EH54 6AX

01506 282012  
[info@improvementservice.org.uk](mailto:info@improvementservice.org.uk)  
[www.improvementservice.org.uk](http://www.improvementservice.org.uk)  
[@improvserv](https://twitter.com/improvserv)