

## Business Case Template

<b>Version Control</b>		
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Version One	Kate Faulkes	14 <sup>th</sup> February 2017

**Project: South Area Council Local Advice Services**

**Directorate: Communities**

**Date: 14<sup>th</sup> February 2017**

### **Description of the Goods and Service**

The contracted service will use a range of local venues to provide the full range of advice and information services to local people across the South Area, by offering:

- The full range of Welfare Rights issues, including encouraging the full maximising of in and out of work benefit claims
- Information and advice around the impact of Welfare Reforms, including support and/or representation at appeals and tribunals
- Debt counselling and the agreement of formal financial settlements with creditors
- Issues related to health, employment, education, travel etc.
- Housing related issues, including support to avoid homelessness
- Financial, consumer/utilities and legal issues
- Signposting and referral to other specialist provision, including specialist support, training, employability/job-search, Credit Union & money management

This will require the employment of staff to continue to provide a fully qualified and experienced outreach team to be deployed across the South Area, offering a series of regular 'slots' of face-to-face advice delivered in easily accessible buildings across each ward. Use of these buildings has already been negotiated and will not need to be done by the provider/s,

The provider must deliver **at least one day per week face-to-face service to each ward** within the Area, although this may be altered during the lifetime of the contract in response to evidenced change in local need.

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This delivery should comprise at least one half day per week per ward of Welfare Rights advice and at least one half day per week per ward of Advice work. This must include at least one weekly twilight/evening session to enable access to those in full time work, although this can be delivered in one of the wards only.

The service should continue to be offered in the same venues and at the same times as delivered by the existing contract.

In addition to the required services listed above, the South Area Council would welcome the introduction of additional formats for work with clients (for example, webchat, use of social media, using volunteers, check and send methodologies) although this should not be offered as a replacement for the face-to-face service outlined above.

All staff must also be provided with regular specialist supervision, which could be provided either by the employing organisation or 'bought in' by a suitable third party organisation where this is not possible.

### Target Groups

Residents of all ages who live within the Darfield, Hoyland Milton, Rockingham and Wombwell wards who require the advice and support offered by this contract.

However, the evidence base suggests that although the service offered will be universal, the following target groups are disproportionately more likely to require the services offered:

- People in low paid and/or part time work who are reliant on in-work benefits
- People with mental and physical health problems and/or disabilities
- Older people who are dependent on a state pension but who often do not claim additional related benefits to which they are entitled
- People whose vulnerability would make it unlikely that they could resolve the issues they face without help

### Proposal and Justification for Goods / Service

The initial need for locally based advice and information services was first identified by the South Area Council in 2013, when it became apparent from ward based data showed a huge increase in the demand for borough-wide welfare rights and citizen's advice amongst people living in the South Area. Further investigation showed that this was due to a number of changing factors, including:

- An increase in unemployment and under-employment across the Area leaving larger number of people reliant on particularly in-work benefits
- The migration of clients from Incapacity Benefit to Employment Support Allowance and from Disability Living Allowance to Personal Independence Payments.
- The introduction of the 'Bedroom Tax'

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- The move to housing payments made monthly direct to tenants
- The need for those on Housing Benefit (80% of who are in low paid work nationally) to contribute towards their housing and Council Tax costs
- A massive increase in those having their benefits sanctioned

This has led to a number of issues, including:

- A growing number of housing related enquiries around the risk of homelessness.
- A continued growth in clients seeking help with unmanageable levels of debt,
- Increasing numbers of clients with poor money management skills combined with a lack of resources within support organisations to offer support early on to prevent people reaching crisis point
- The unknown impact of the introduction of Universal Credit and a move to all applications for in and out of work benefits (including pension related) to be completed online, as well as the continuing impact of direct housing payments to tenants.

Evidence of issues specifically within the South Area:

These national and borough-wide issues are heavily reflected in the statistics from the existing South Area Council contract delivered by Barnsley Citizen's Advice Bureau and BMBC Welfare Rights Service, which found that in the 2 years from June 2014-16:

- 39 individuals required urgent help in order to keep their homes
- Local people presented with £1,449,000 of debt which they could no longer manage and which required the negotiation of a formal financial settlement
- Local people were supported to £1,581,000 of largely in-work and health related benefits to which they did not know they were entitled
- Over 200 people required help from either the Credit Union or money management support in order to budget more effectively
- Over 700 specialist referrals were required to help with the issues presented by local people, including solicitors, homeless organisations & housing providers, domestic violence support, drug and alcohol support and a range of benefit agencies

**Date that Goods / Service Required to be Delivered**

The new Advice Services contract will be required from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2017, to avoid a break in service provision. The current contract is due to end on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2017. The project currently has two staff; one of whom is seconded from BMBC Welfare Rights who would return to a substantive post in this section if the advice services contract is not recommissioned or there is a break in the service. The other member of staff has been employed by Barnsley Citizens Advice Bureau specifically for this contract and would face redundancy if the service was not recommissioned or there was a break in service. She would be eligible for TUPE to another provider if the current provider was not recommissioned; having been in post for over 2 years.

**Budget**

The cost of the Advice Services contract is £75,000 per annum (a total of £150,000 for the full 2 year contract) broken down as follows:

- £74,000 per annum (£148,000 over 2 years) for the employment of staff to provide service delivery exclusively to this contract. The staff team employed on this contract must be fully qualified and able to demonstrate skills in advice work and in generic welfare rights advice.
- A figure of £2,000 over 2 years (£1,000 per annum) to cover promotional and venue costs to support the delivery of advice services.
- Costs for venues will not be provided because the appointed provider/s would be required to use previously negotiated community venues offered as in-kind support by BMBC and which are already in use.

**Benefits of Proposal**

The Advice Services contract offers the following benefits and added value:

- The existing service (on which this adapted commission proposal is heavily based) has been independently assessed in 2016 as having a social value of over £28 for every £1 invested in the cost of the contract. This high value is based on the positive contributions made by local advice services to reducing anxiety, stress, depression; their impacts on physical health and also in the reduction of people becoming homeless as a result of intervention and support. This contributes to the Council's **People Achieving Their Potential** priority through supporting people to become healthier, happier, independent & active.
- This contract provides a highly bespoke and locally delivered service which is heavily evidence driven. This enables the help and support offered to be both targeted to very localised need and offered at venues which are easily accessible to even vulnerable individuals. This contributes to the Council's **Strong and Resilient Communities** priority by helping customers to contact us more easily and through building stronger individuals who are more able to self-help and who will form part of more resilient communities.

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- Because this contract provides services which are additional to and complementary to mainstream town centre advice provision, these locally based advice services help to reduce pressure on mainstream services and reduce waiting times for those needing help. This is particularly crucial in dealing with issues like debt, where it is much easier to negotiate help for an individual if the debt is not given too much time to grow. This contributes to the Council's **Strong and Resilient Communities** priority by helping customers to contact us more easily, and to the **People Achieving Their Potential** priority by reducing demand through improving access to early help.
- With town centre based mainstream services moving increasingly towards triage assessments and online/web based support, the local Advice Services contract offers intensive face-to-face drop-in support for vulnerable clients who may struggle with 'lighter touch' help. Monitoring information collected by workers on the existing contract found that around 50% of clients seen would not have been able to fully or partially self-help because they were vulnerable. This contributes to the Council's **People Achieving Their Potential** priority through supporting people to become healthier, happier, independent & active.
- In addition, the work done to promote local advice services with community groups will enable vulnerable groups in most need of help to access these additional services. The current contract has very successfully targeted a range of such groups, including older people, people with disabilities, Food Bank users and those at risk of becoming homeless. This contributes to the **People Achieving Their Potential** priority by reducing demand through improving access to early help.
- The newly adapted tender specification for this contract now includes a requirement to provide practitioner briefing sessions on changes to welfare regulations etc. This will help practitioners from a range of locally based statutory and voluntary organisations to refer and signpost clients most in need more effectively. This contributes to the **People Achieving Their Potential** priority by reducing demand through improving access to early help.

**In House Provision /Other Contracts**

As described above, both Barnsley Citizens Advice Bureau and BMBC Welfare Rights offer a mainstream town centre service. Both services are increasingly oversubscribed; a problem made more acute by recently agreed reductions in funding. This is being partially managed through increasingly use of triage assessments and a range of online/Check & Send type of support. However, those who are more vulnerable and less able to self-help may have to wait for longer periods of time to get help with needs which may be urgent.

In the light of this, the new contract will offer much needed face-to-face support for the most vulnerable clients, and in addition will require the contracted provider to work alongside existing mainstream services to offer localised delivery which will complement and sensibly align that offered in the town centre.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the South Area Council Advice Services contract is recommissioned using the amended tender specification.

**Authorised Approval**

Signed ..... (Position)

Date .....