

North Area Council Outreach Project

2015-2016 Quarter 4

End of Project Year 1

Narrative Report

AdviceBarnsley



Contents

Summary of Achievements

Milestones

Activity Intervention Targets

Social Value Objectives

Quality Standards

Case Studies

Development of Strategic Priorities

NB: The final quarter of Year 1 has been extended to the end of September to bring the NAC Outreach Advice Project into line with standard financial reporting schedules. Therefore, in both the matrix report and this written report, all YTD/cumulative figures will relate to the period 14th September 2015 to 23rd September 2016. All Quarter 4 figures relate to the period 11th June 2016 to 23rd September 2016.

Summary of achievements

In the first year of this project we have supported 1,058 client contacts with a variety of different issues including benefits, debt and consumer. The largest proportion of these have accessed the service for benefits advice, and in total we have secured an estimated total of £1,442,320 of benefit gains helping to bring additional income into the North Area. This figure equates to a direct return on investment of £20 for every pound invested in the project.

Year to date 41 clients have been referred on for specialist debt advice, and in total we have worked with clients with a combined indebtedness of £239,703. This means those clients will now have a greater disposable income to spend because their debt repayments will be negotiated to manageable levels.

As well as having a significant impact on the financial situations, we know that seeking advice has also led to an improvement in the health and wellbeing of the clients in the area. Evaluation survey responses indicated that across the year – 93% of respondents felt less stressed after attending the drop-in sessions, and 76% reported being more able to manage their own affairs.

Throughout all quarters of the first year the project has experienced very high levels of engagement – and during this last quarter the advisers have continued to see client numbers that are approaching capacity levels. During Quarter 4, the advisers made a total of 288 client contacts.

Milestones

Staff

There have been no changes to the staffing structure since the last Quarter. Both full time advisers remain in post.

Steering Group

The project steering group, comprising of the North Area Council Manager, senior management and advisers from both Citizens Advice Barnsley and DIAL and a councillor from each of the four wards, continues to meet on a quarterly basis. Since September 2015 three Project Steering Group meetings have taken place. Due to several extraneous factors, and by agreement of all involved, the final Steering Group of this year was cancelled.

Outreach

There have been no changes to the Outreach Venues since Quarter 1. The venues are located in each of the four wards and are as follows: Emmanuel Church (Old Town), Mapplewell Village Hall (Darton East), The Darton Centre (Darton West) and Roundhouse Lifelong Learning Centre (St Helens).

Operational Group

The Operational Group has continued to meet on a monthly basis to discuss ongoing operational issues directly related to the running of the project. This group comprises of 2 advisers, 2 service managers and admin support.

Home Visit Protocol

The home visit protocol ensures that vulnerable people on the edge of crisis are able to access our services. So far this year, the majority of our clients have been able to attend one of the drop-in sessions. This quarter no clients have accessed the service using home visits, which means the total number of home visits in the first year of the project remains at 7.

Activity Intervention Targets

Volunteers feel supported to contribute to their local community

Both organisations continue to utilise volunteers to assist clients. Since last quarter the front of house volunteer has left to seek employment opportunities that will utilise the skills and experience she developed working in the community. Many other volunteers continue to support the project from behind the scenes as administrators and telephone advisers.

Outreach Sessions

During Quarter 4 a total of 58 outreaches were run across 15 weeks. (11th June 2016 – 23rd September 2016) This comprises of 54 advice sessions run by Citizens Advice Barnsley and 46 advice sessions run by DIAL. During this quarter some individual sessions have not gone ahead due to annual leave or sickness, but only 2 outreach sessions were cancelled completely. The reasons for this include: Bank Holiday and the venue pre-booked by Emmanuel Church.

Home Visits

During the final quarter of Year 1, both Citizens Advice Barnsley and DIAL report they have assisted no clients via home visits.

Current Caseload

Citizens Advice Barnsley currently have 4 clients who require ongoing work and support. Throughout the quarter there have been a selection of other cases where the initial issues could not be resolved fully at outreach, and further casework was required. These cases have now been completed. Where clients have been passed on to other specialist workers ongoing casework is being undertaken via those caseworkers funding streams. At DIAL, all client cases are considered 'live' and remain open on an ongoing basis. Therefore the current caseload at DIAL is equal to the number of cumulative active clients. (598)

Benefit Gain

Citizens Advice Barnsley figures are calculated based on the benefit checks that are offered to clients and the estimated additional income that the client could claim. DIAL figures are only included in the report when actual benefits have been received by the clients. As there is often 13 weeks delay between when the client visits the outreach and when a benefit is approved, there will be a similar delay in DIAL reporting their figures. Therefore the final total amount of benefit gains that have been generated from work undertaken this year is likely to be higher than the £1.4million already reported.

Financial / Debt Settlements negotiated

During Quarter 4, 14 clients, with a total indebtedness of £39,349 have been assisted via this project. 10 of these have been referred on to specialist debt support services within Citizens Advice Barnsley.

Volunteer recruitment and training / Number of residents supported by volunteers

Since the 14th September 2015 the bureau has recruited 11 volunteers who are currently undergoing training in various roles, including administration, reception and telephone gateway.

Social Value Objectives

Recruitment and deployment of volunteers

As previously mentioned both organisations utilise volunteers behind the scenes to provide administrative support to this project.

Promotion of employment, education and training opportunities

Leaflets and details from local education and employment providers are made available to clients at all the drop-ins.

Work with local organisations/ Development of strong community networks

As we reported last quarter, contact has been maintained with local organisations within the community, but fewer targeted events have taken place as client numbers continue to remain close to capacity.

Promotion of community and individual self help

Through the work that the caseworkers are doing, clients are more able to deal with their issues themselves and so residents are becoming more resilient and educated as to their rights. Feedback from clients indicates that across the year, 76% feel more able to manage their own affairs since visiting the outreach service, and that in Quarter 4, 89% felt more confident in managing their own affairs.

Local spend and contribution to the local economy

So far, an estimated £1.4million of income has been generated through benefit gains since the start of the project and will be available to clients to spend within the local community. This equates to a direct return on investment of £20 per pound spent on this project. However, if you take into account the social impact on peoples' lives such as improved health and wellbeing, reduced social isolation etc, the figure is likely to be much higher. Analysis of a similar council funded project has calculated the social return on investment is likely to be as much as £28.81 per £1 invested.

Quality Standards

All quality standard outcomes have been achieved. There continues to be no safeguarding, information assurance or equality legislation incidents to report.

Case Studies

Case Study 1

Client attended outreach as they had just been diagnosed with cancer and even though they were still receiving full payment from work the extra costs associated with their treatment were making their life financially difficult.

We advised the client about the different grants available through MacMillan and how to apply for these which are for amounts up to £400.

We also advised them about PIP and the process to apply for this. We are currently awaiting the paperwork coming through but it is hoped that our client will be around £70 better off per week.

"Thank you CAB I feel that I can now continue my treatment with one less worry."

Case Study 2

Client attended St. Helens Ward outreach for a benefits check. Following check it was apparent that a Severe Disability Premium (SDP) had not been added onto her Employment & Support Allowance Calculation. I contacted ESA and highlighted this financial error oversight to them.

The client was subsequently awarded (SDP) of £61.85 per week on top of her ESA payments and received back payment of £989.

"Thanks Mick. It has made a big difference. I can now get out more as I can get a taxi if I need to."

Case Study 3

Client attended outreach due to a housing issue. They were new to the area having moved to Barnsley to attend rehab. Client wanted to settle in the area and make a new life for themselves but had no idea how to go about getting housing and household goods. In addition to this our client was worried that if they weren't able to find suitable housing they may have to return to their old life with a risk of substance misuse.

We advised them about council and private rented properties and they decided that they would prefer council due to the security of the tenancy. We helped the client look at relevant grants - both local welfare assistance and charitable support, as well as support services available in the area to help them in their new life.

Our client is now settled in their property with a suitable support network.

Development Of Strategic Priorities for Year 2

- To use the momentum that we have achieved, to continue to assist all clients that attend the drop-in
- To ensure that the staff have sufficient time to deal with the clients that attend drop-in and complete all necessary paperwork
- To manage any issues caused by oversubscribed drop-ins by directing clients to alternative venues within the North Area Project
- To monitor overall client numbers to ensure workload remains within manageable levels