

Report of the Head of Resources

**PRESENTATION BY THE CENTRAL AND EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE CITIZENS
ADVICE BUREAU**

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To introduce the presentation by the Central and East Northamptonshire Citizens Advice Bureau.
- 1.2 The presentation relates to the work CENCAB carries out in the borough in support of the council's priorities.

2 Executive summary

None.

3 Appendices

Appendix: Report submitted by CENCAB

4 Proposed action:

- 4.1 The committee is invited to RESOLVE to note the presentation, and;**
- 4.2 The committee is invited to discuss issues relating to the work of CENCAB and identify any matters it RECOMMENDS be reported to relevant policy committees for their attention.**

5 Background

This presentation forms part of the general programme for the Partnerships and Performance Committee, reviewing the work of partners.

6 Discussion

- 6.1 The committee receives presentations from organisations who are either funded by the council, or who play an important part in the life of the borough.
- 6.2 Each presentation gives members an opportunity to learn more about the organisation and its impact on the borough. After the presentation there is a chance to ask questions of the presenter.
- 6.3 If any items of significance arise, members may wish to request a further report from a relevant officer or make a recommendation for action by a policy committee.
- 6.4 The council provided two grants to CENCAB as part of the three year grant programme (currently extended for a further year). £30k pa was granted under the 'debt' theme and £20k pa under the 'employment' theme.

7 Legal powers

The Local Authorities (Alternative Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2001 empower the council to establish one or more overview and scrutiny committees. Whilst the council no longer has a designated overview and scrutiny committee, the Partnerships and Performance Committee has been given the role of reviewing and monitoring the performance of council services and services provided on behalf of the council by external bodies. A local authority may invite persons other than members or officers of the authority to attend meetings of such a committee.

8 Financial and value for money implications

There are no such implications arising directly from this report. However, effective review is one of the means by which the council secures effective use of its resources.

9 Risk analysis

A risk table is usually completed for any report setting out a proposed course of action that entails risks at the outset of the project or if the risks change along the way. This is not relevant in respect of this report.

10 Implications for resources, stronger and safer communities, and equalities

There are no direct implications arising directly from this report.

11 Author and contact officer

Bridget Lawrence, Head of Resources.

12 Consultees

None.

13 Background papers

There are no background papers to this report.



Presentation to Members

1. Service Provision

Give an update on progress against the agreed outputs/outcomes for 2014-15. If performance is not on track for the time of year, please explain the reasons why, and what the organisation is planning to do to mitigate this.

As referred to in previous monitoring information the bureau has continued to operate within broadly similar parameters as previous years. The projects undertaken have been:

- A “core” offering of Employment and Debt advice and in other areas, offered principally by volunteers supported by paid staff
- The “Bridge” Project – a service designed to support people either vulnerably housed or homeless
- An employability project – designed to support individuals into volunteering as a way of improving their skills and employability – provided in partnership with Nene Valley Community Action.
- Financial capability services – aimed at the needs of both potential service users and these professionals who support them (funded through the Big Lottery Fund’s Advice Services Transition Fund)
- Energy Advice and awareness raising (funded from multiple sources)

Additional client activity can also be attributed to other funders in particular as a consequence of funding from Macmillan which enables us to support many clients living in the Borough affected by cancer. The usual referral route for these services is via health professionals. We provide a small separate report detailing activities for these clients below.

Table 1: Employment Outcomes

OUTPUT <i>(Type of resource, facility or service to be provided)</i>	OUTCOME <i>(e.g. give people the confidence to return to work)</i>	
<p>1. Give advice or information on tackling worklessness to at least 150 clients</p> <p>Evidenced by client numbers</p>	<p>To reduce worklessness across the Borough.</p> <p>Increased access through a range of channels to training and skills that lead to employment</p>	<p>We advised on 349 clients in respect of employment issues. Activities undertaken by NVCA are referred to in the Appendix</p>
<p>2. Use a range of methods for client contact to maximise access to service eg individual callers, via telephone appt, leaflets, community outreach, BCW one stop shop etc to reach those in greatest need of advice and guidance.</p> <p>Evidenced by client profile report and report on access channels of clients</p>	<p>Increased access through a range of channels to training and skills that lead to employment</p>	<p>See below Table 3</p>
<p>3. Working relationships with partners or training and skills providers that can be/ are used to refer or signpost clients</p> <p>Evidenced by feedback report and survey feedback Evidence of volunteer placements</p>	<p>Increased access through a range of channels to training and skills that lead to employment</p>	<p>NVCA has continued to disseminate information throughout the wider voluntary sector</p>
<p>4. Increase external funding to allow the development of new projects or enhanced current service provision, to contribute towards meeting the needs of current or potential Wellingborough clients.</p> <p>Evidenced by feedback report and annual accounts</p>	<p>To strengthen the funding base of the Bureau through diversification.</p>	<p>The bureau has secured funding from the “Advice Services Transition Fund”</p>
<p>5. Gather feedback from clients at least once a year on their experiences and noted increases in skills and confidence in approaching the job market. Include next steps to track actual or intended progress.</p> <p>Evidenced by customer feedback forms.</p>	<p>To reduce worklessness across the Borough.</p> <p>Increased access through a range of channels to training and skills that lead to employment</p>	<p>Feedback shows positive experience of our interventions in respect of overcoming barriers to entering the labour market.</p>

Table 2: Debt Outcomes

OUTPUT <i>(Type of resource, facility or service to be provided)</i>	OUTCOME <i>(e.g. give people the confidence to return to work)</i>	
<p>1. Give advice or information on debt, debt management and income maximisation to answer at least 1,000 enquiries.</p> <p>Evidenced by client numbers and purpose of enquiry</p>	<p>To reduce problem debt within the Borough.</p> <p>Increased access to preventative and generalist budgeting and personal debt advice through a range of channels</p>	<p>1722 Debt Issues were dealt with over the financial year comprising an estimated value of £2850000</p>
<p>2. Assist clients to maximise income and benefit gains.</p> <p>Evidenced by report on value of debts encountered and report on amount of benefit gain</p>	<p>Maximise the income of the borough's most financially deprived communities</p> <p>Increased financial benefit take up across the borough</p>	<p>We advised 623 clients in respect to benefit issues addressing 2293 individual benefit issues. Income was maximised on 311 occasions achieving benefit gains of £1694109</p>
<p>3. Recruit and train new volunteers with an emphasis on recruiting from a range of diverse communities – age, ethnicity, gender etc.</p> <p>Evidenced by report on volunteer profile and recruitment</p>	<p>To reflect the diversity of the Borough within the team of advisors.</p>	<p>The bureau currently has 21 volunteers in training with 4 recruited in the previous month.</p>
<p>4. Increase external funding to allow the development of new projects or enhanced current service provision, to contribute towards meeting the needs of current or potential Wellingborough clients.</p> <p>Evidenced by feedback report and annual accounts</p>	<p>To strengthen the funding base of the Bureau through diversification.</p>	<p>See below</p>
<p>5. Use a range of methods for client contact to improve access to service eg Gateway 'triage' system and telephone service, outreach services etc to reach those in greatest need of financial advice.</p> <p>Evidenced by client profile report and report on access channels of clients</p>	<p>Increased access to preventative and generalist budgeting and personal debt advice through a range of channels</p> <p>To reduce problem debt within the Borough.</p>	

2. Volunteers

The bureau currently possesses 27 volunteers. This year three of these volunteers acquired accreditation as authorised debt intermediaries (the bureau now has 7 authorised intermediaries). We are attempting to step up our volunteer recruitment.

3. Please give an example of a highlight during the year

We have secured a major “business to business” contract with Anglian Water to undertake the assessment function for the company’s new Social Tariff scheme

4. Have any measures been taken to identify and/or meet local need? If so, what?

Yes, in fact the Advice Services Transition Fund referred to in an earlier answer is premised on the decentralisation of advice services by developing access through Local Advice Access Points. In this respect some work was done at the planning stage showing where in Wellingborough clients are less likely to use services from than would otherwise be expected. Unsurprisingly this showed that those areas with a high level of ambient need for advice services, but further away from our main centres of operation, are less likely to access services. Accordingly we are establishing these Local Advice Access Points at the Hope Centre in Hemmingwell and in Croylands Children’s Centre.

5. Have you modified the service in the light of surveys, feedback, comments and complaints? If so, how?

No significant changes have been made to service design over the last year. Overall income has been significantly lower than previous years and all efforts have been made to maintain services at current levels. Post merger all back office functions, as well as volunteer training will be integrate3d across both sites (a process which has already started).

6. Do you work in partnership? If so, who with and what work has been done this year in this area?

Yes, we have a range of active partnerships that we will continue to seek to develop as the year progresses. The following are some of our partners – particularly relevant to our work in Wellingborough

We work with:

Community Law Service. We are working with this organisation in respect to Advice Service Transition Fund projects in Wellingborough and East Northamptonshire (of which we are lead) and in Northampton (of which they are lead). CLS’s contribution to this project is in respect to specialist advice services but they have asked to deliver these only in East Northamptonshire

The Hope Centre and Croylands Children’s Centre will act as Local Advice Access Points in respect of the above mentioned ASTF project

Northamptonshire Rights and Equality Council: Will be delivering “Public Legal Education “activities for us in Wellingborough – again through our funding from the Advice Services Transition Fund

Macmillan Cancer Support: We have been funded for a number of years by this charity to undertake Specialist work for clients affected by cancer countywide. Both an analysis of client need and the merger of the two bureaux (the Macmillan contract sitting with the former Northampton and District CAB) will enable us to deliver more services in Wellingborough such that the percentage of all clients supported through this funding and residing in Wellingborough is increased.

7. Describe any situations that you feel have made or will make a difference for the future (e.g. changes in local circumstances or changes to your funding)

As mentioned below – although we enter the year in a strong position financially, the level of funding attributable to services in Wellingborough , combined with uncertainty over accommodation place our overall presence within the town in some question.

8. Financial Information

Has the organisation stayed within budget? If not, how is this accounted for?

Year end returns indicate we have generated a modest surplus – which goes some way to rectifying losses made in 2013/14.

9. What has been done this year towards fundraising?

The bureaux income for 2015/16 is expected be in the region of £700,000

- A commercial “business to business” contract with Anglian Water Funding to become a regional “Pension Wise” delivery centre worth around £200,000 over 15 months
- Funding from Citizens Advice to become a regional “Energy Best Deal” champion bureaux
- Funding from a regional housing association to provide debt advice to tenants

This is up on previous years. However, much of this relates to contracted work and income is therefore restricted. The “core” activities of bureau services in Wellingborough face quite severe funding pressures with funding from the Big Lottery “Advice Services Transition Fund” due to end in September/October 2015/16. Whilst this funding has gone some way to achieving it’s aim of making the bureau less reliant on the income required to support paid staff (a number of volunteers have (see previous responses) secured status as authorised Debt Reflex Order intermediaries (for example)), it still leaves a very large funding gap in place from the middle of 2015/16 onwards. Surpluses generated on projects will, in effect, be used to maintain staffing levels at broadly the same level throughout 2015/16 but there is very limited resilience to staff sickness or in respect to any fallout consequential from performance management. It is also the case that the level of “cross subsidisation” from surplus generating projects, based on this analysis is greater for

Wellingborough serves than Northampton services.

10. Organisational capacity and development

What has been/is being done during the year to develop the organisation?

As with previous years the bureau's structure has had to follow the services we will provide determined by multiple funding sources. This year due to the very significant increase in staffing levels the depth of this restructure will be more pronounced than in previous years. This work is currently underway. As already mentioned, the bureau now has 7 authorised debt relief order intermediaries. We retain the Specialist Quality Mark.

11. Quality Assurance Systems

How do staff, volunteers and users contribute to the management of the services?

There is a senior management team of 3 (shortly to be extended), volunteer meetings, volunteer representatives on the trustee board and regular staff meetings.

What systems do you have for screening appointing, monitoring and disciplining your staff/volunteers?

We have a well-defined policy for recruitment, development, monitoring and "performance improvement" as well as disciplinary matters for both volunteers and paid staff – all policies available for inspection on request.

Do you have systems in place to monitor and measure equality in service delivery, if so, what do the results show?

Yes, the bureau monitors client profile as a mandatory field when recording all work undertaken. This means we are able to take a view as to how representative the bureau is in meeting the needs of the community it serves. Overall, this shows that the bureau supports clients with a broad range of characteristics – with marginally less success (in numerical terms) in reaching out to older clients and to those living in "outlying" areas of Wellingborough. We encourage professional referrals and are able to engage with a wide range of partner agencies in supporting referrals to address this marginal deficiency in reach.

For further information please contact:

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