Welcome to the latest in Advice NI’s series of reports profiling the work of the Advice NI network in 2010/2011.

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In the past few years we have seen the benefit system and the nature of the benefit system itself bow to the demand of the economic recession. The availability of benefits and the amount provided to help with basic needs has reduced significantly with the loss of the tax credits and the welfare reforms which have focused on the poor. Each year, however, the local government funding for the advice services increases which means that we can continue to provide the very last line of defence against poverty.

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Service Delivery

Staff Experience

- 0 - 5 years: 20%
- 5 - 10 years: 32%
- 10 - 20 years: 22%
- Over 20 years: 12%
- 1 year or less: 6%
- 2 years or less: 8%
- 2 - 5 years: 20%
- 5 - 10 years: 32%
- 10 - 20 years: 22%
- Over 20 years: 12%

Funding Sources

Response rate: 42 organisations

Visit Appointment: 33%
Visit Drop In: 21%
Letter: 2%
Telephone: 35%
Internet: 5%
Other: 4%
Method of Initial Enquiry

Average opening hrs p.w.: 38 hours per week

Advice Services have continued to strive to meet demand within an uncertain funding climate. The situation continues to be challenging due in part to the level of funding which has been secured. The majority of advice services have continued to provide a freephone service and some provision to centre based services remain. However, there are concerns about the level of funding secured which is not sufficient to meet all the demand. The situation continues to be challenging.

The majority of advice services are funded by local authority funding of some form. Advice NI is a social sector organisation and therefore government funding is necessary to ensure that advice is provided in a timely and appropriate manner which is client-centred. It is therefore imperative that the funding climate remains robust to ensure ongoing sustainability of service delivery.

Advice NI appreciates that whilst business generally is increasing, the level of funding available is insufficient to meet the demand, as a result of the economic downturn. Advice NI’s main funders, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, have all made it clear that any increases in funding will not be sufficient to meet the demand for services. Advice NI therefore continues to carry out advocacy work in relation to central government funding for advice services.

Advice NI is actively seeking funding and support from a range of funders to ensure ongoing sustainability of service delivery. Advice NI is fortunate to work closely with the Charitable Trusts, Big Lottery, Health and Social Care Trusts and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. Advice NI continues to seek further funding opportunities and is committed to working closely with funders to ensure ongoing sustainability.

Advice NI also encourages organisations to refer clients to Advice NI where appropriate. Advice NI also promotes the range of services available to clients, which include advice on housing, benefits, debt, income support, legal, family and community. Advice NI provides a comprehensive range of services and remains committed to providing a free, confidential service to everyone who makes use of its service.

Advice NI would like to thank all its funders for their sustained commitment to the work of Advice NI and is committed to providing ongoing support to the community. Advice NI would also like to thank all our staff who continue to provide a high standard of service to clients and to continue to support the voluntary sector.

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