

Report to Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Agenda
Item:
A.5

Meeting Date: 3rd October 2013
Portfolio: Communities and Housing
Key Decision:
Within Policy and
Budget Framework
Public / Private

Title: WELFARE ADVICE SERVICE
Report of: The Director of Community Engagement
Report Number: CD 49/13

Purpose / Summary:

An update report detailing the cost and impact of the Welfare Advice Services

Recommendations:

Note the current position

Tracking

Executive:	N/A
Overview and Scrutiny:	N/A
Council:	N/A

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Carlisle City Council's Welfare Advice Service provides specialist advice dealing only with welfare benefits either through referrals or direct. One FTE Manager and 2.6 x FTE Advisors assist on any aspect cases from initial claim to tribunal and upper tribunal representation.
- 1.2 The service is delivered via telephone advice and appointments, from the Civic Centre and two rural outreach surgeries. Home visit appointments are offered to anyone unable to access these bases due to disability or poor health.

2. SERVICE COSTS

- 2.1 The budgeted service costs for 2013/14 are £163,000 per year, of which £121,800 are employee costs:

Employee costs	£121,800
Transport costs	£100
Supplies and services	£7300
Support services	£33,000

3. IMPACT OF SERVICE

- 3.1 The 2012/13 total benefit gains are as detailed below:

	2012/13
Annual gain	£1,237,775.50
Total live enquiries	362
Total Appeals	127

- 3.2 From 1st April 2013 to 27th August 2013 the total benefit gains was £560,240.38.
- 3.3 Demand for welfare advice services have increased as a result of current welfare reform changes. This has placing increased pressure delivery. As a result the

service is reviewing operational service delivery and developing further partnerships to ensure that the most vulnerable people can be assisted and represented appropriately. This has included prioritising caseloads and referrals and increased and enhanced partnership approaches with other local advice agencies such as:

- A trial project working in partnership with Cumbria Advice Network (CAN) and People First aiming to assist vulnerable people who struggle to advocate for themselves. This includes for example people with mental health problems or learning disabilities who are struggling to cope with the complexity of the welfare benefit system.
- Working as member of Carlisle’s Advice Transition’s Fund Partnership. This collaboration has secured funding for ‘Telly Talk’. Telly Talk is a webcam technology which allows a person sitting in a local venue to speak ‘face to face’ with an adviser. It will allow residents living in the more remote areas of the district to access advice services in a new and innovative way. It will be installed over the next couple of months at all the participating advice services (Cumbria Law Centre, Carlisle Citizen’s Advice Bureau, Age UK and Carlisle City Council benefits advice service).
- Welfare reform training and workshops for internal and external staff and groups
- Acting as a member of Carlisle’s Welfare Reform Board.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO THE CARLISLE PLAN PRIORITIES

Action 3: In the light of welfare reform changes ensure that vulnerable residents and client groups housing needs are understood		
Assess the housing and welfare / benefits needs arising from the government Universal Credit programme and seek to work with partners to meet these needs.	K Gerrard	April 2013
Review work programmes and service level agreements to ensure advice services supported by the Council are well co-ordinated and deliver good value for money.	K Gerrard	April 2013 - onwards
Review the use of Discretionary Housing Payments fund to ensure the most effective use.	K Gerrard	Through to 2016

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**Appendices
attached to report:**

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:

- **None**

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS/RISKS:

Chief Executive's -

Community Engagement –

Economic Development –

Governance –

Local Environment –

Resources -