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Community Advice for Barnet: Needs Analysis & Equalities Impact Assessment

A Research and Consultancy Report for the
London Borough of Barnet

November 2010
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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 CONTEXT

The London Borough of Barnet is proposing to change the basis of its funding to advice services. Currently grants are given to a range of organisations to provide this service. It is proposed to offer a single contract to one supplier or a consortium of suppliers to deliver this service. MBARC were commissioned to prepare a report on how this might be done and the impacts of doing it. This is our report.

1.2 SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

- i. Barnet requires a level of advice above the norm for an English local authority area. We suggest that this is about 4 percentage points above the norm. Given the trends shown by the Index of Deprivation we feel this will be an underestimate. This figure rises to almost 37% at its highest in Burnt Oak.
- ii. There is no natural hub from which the whole borough can effectively be served. Cross borough transport is difficult and the physical location of a centre will significantly impact on who the service users are.
- iii. Barnet has a concentration of need for advice services along its western border but with significant areas in the east and pockets in the north. There are some variations across the age spectrum but not such as to affect service design.
- iv. Barnet has significant income deprivation. The initial brief for the design of the new service reflects this, focussing in significant measure on welfare benefits. This seems appropriate. The fact that debt has now overtaken welfare benefits in national measures of demand must however be born in mind.
- v. There are specific housing and accommodation issues, particularly relating to temporary accommodation. Housing advice is being addressed outside the scope of this report and is not considered in detail here.
- vi. The Council's own performance should not be a significant factor affecting need for advice. The Council was a 4 star performer for benefits service in its last Comprehensive Performance Assessment.
- vii. The Council's proposed shift from a grant regime to a contract is one which, in principle, we endorse as giving the public far more certainty about what their money will buy.
- viii. The current pattern of provision is fairly typical with a range of advice providers of varying sizes providing advice at varying levels.

- ix. In this context, we endorse the Council's decision to offer the service on tender to one supplier or one consortium. We believe that, with the right provider, this offers better assurance of quality and greater flexibility in dealing with changing circumstances and staff absence, planned or otherwise.
- x. Clearly, changes to the Council's funding regime will have an impact on the agencies currently providing advice and the Council needs to monitor the impact this has on the provision of advice by those services.
- xi. Closure of or financial instability of agencies is a threat to inward investment in that other funders may withdraw or not renew funding. This probable impact on the provider landscape needs to be considered throughout this process.
- xii. A reduction in the overall spending on advice impacts right across the borough, but, on account of the nature of advice services, the most disadvantaged communities potentially are hit hardest. The Council intends to re-focus the service to minimise the impact on the most disadvantaged by focusing the available resources on those most likely to be in real need of advice and this report aims to look at how this can be done most effectively.

1.3 SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Part 6 of the report sets out the key recommendations which are summarised below

1.3.1 LOCATION(S)

- i. The service should have one main office base where all staff are located.
- ii. The service should have one main public access point.
- iii. Some out of office hours access should be available to make it accessible to the "9 - 5" workforce.
- iv. The main base and main access point should be located in the west of the borough on or near a main thoroughfare and ideally somewhere where people are likely to go when about their normal business - such as a market.
- v. A small number of locations should be chosen for weekly out-posted sessions - from one to a maximum of three.

1.3.2 SERVICE MODEL

- i. The service must have an effective triage system.
- ii. The core of the service should be work at the Advice and initial Casework level.
- iii. Second tier advice should be offered to other professionals - social workers,

- careers advisors, nurses, etc. and community groups but this service would not be the primary source of high level specialist advice to other advisors.
- iv. The service should allocate a significant and ongoing resource to early intervention and prevention.
 - v. The service should focus its resources on welfare benefits advice. It should give advice on debts, referring complex cases. Advice in other areas should be available on a more limited basis.
 - vi. Where possible, advice should be given by telephone or email and residents supported to pursue matters themselves within the limits of their personal capability.
 - vii. Supported self-help services such as CASHflow should be embraced.
 - viii. The service must develop excellent referral networks with all other advice providers serving the borough.
 - ix. The service must have adequate and appropriate quality assurance systems.
 - vi. The service should have an educational role especially in times of rapid change of welfare law.
 - vii. Part 6 of the report contains a detailed analysis of how the resources should be allocated between different levels of advice.
 - viii. A high level network of agencies with a strategic interest in advice should be established to annually review the advice strategy for the borough and ensure that all funding is used to maximum effect and duplication is avoided.

1.4 IMPLEMENTATION

Part 7 sets out the transition process as we see it, essential points are:

- i. The new supplier should be in place as soon as possible.
- ii. Intentions of agencies losing their advice funding should be ascertained to enable a realistic map of the continuation or otherwise of current provision to be prepared.
- iii. Arrangements need to be made for ongoing casework from any agency planning to close or cease its advice function.
- iv. Any Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE) responsibility must be identified urgently and addressed in order not to delay recruitment to the new service.
- v. Referral mechanisms must be put in place across the network of services.

- vi. Accurate information of changes and the new service must be sent out to the public and other professionals.

A separate Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out and is included as appendix 3.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 BACKGROUND

In August 2010 the London Borough of Barnet commissioned MBARC to produce a research report to support the development of a Community Advice Service to be delivered by a single contract. The report was to look at levels of need, priority within those needs, service models and the equalities impacts of those models. The model or models were required to be responsive to the level of funding available.

2.2 COMMUNITY ADVICE - DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this report Community Advice has a very specific definition;

- Information, advice and guidance on rights, responsibilities, entitlements and duties in relation to welfare benefits, debts, housing and employment and related areas of law for people who live, work or study in the London Borough of Barnet.
- Assisting those individuals in exercising their legal rights and resolving disputes
- Providing advice to other local professionals and communities (second tier advice).

We do not include the myriad other forms of advice on health, social, personal and community matters which are given by countless organisations.

The Community Advice Service refers to a service to be commissioned by the Chief Executive's Service.

The key parameters of the service are that they will:

- Deliver the largest volume of its work in welfare benefits advice.
- Work alongside other services commissioned by the Council and its partners
- Be aligned to the Council's customer access strategy with a shift to cheaper communication channels, using a single telephone number and consolidating the numbers of physical access points and using new technology where appropriate.
- Reflect the available commissioning budget.
- Be supplied by a single supplier or consortium.
- Together with appropriate re-allocation of Council resources, ensure best value is obtained.

Advice can be seen as an available convenience for those who seek it - a demand led model - or it can be seen as a powerful weapon in tackling disadvantage - a needs led model. The latter definition is taken here and this report aims to highlight methods of achieving maximum impact on disadvantage in the Borough for the allocated resource. It must therefore accept that some demands may not be met.

It should be noted that housing advice is subject to a separate commissioning process.

2.3 METHODOLOGY

2.3.1 OUTLINE

The research comprised:

- An ANARAK survey. ANARAK is a tool developed by Michael Bell Associates (now MBARC) to calculate the likely need for advice on the basis of socio-economic and demographic data. The aim is to assess need not demand. This has been carried out at ward level. Further details of ANARAK are in Appendix two.
- Desktop analysis of other data which provides likely indicators of need. The Council's Business Intelligence Team produce a considerable volume of data an analysis and much of this has been used together with data from other sources to refine the picture of need in the Barnet

2.3.2 FIELDWORK

Together with the Commissioners, MBARC identified key stakeholders who were interviewed in person or by telephone to obtain their perspective on the priorities for the Community Advice Service.

2.3.3 VALIDATING THE RESEARCH - COOPERATIVE ENQUIRY WORKSHOP

A workshop was held on 4 October 2010 attended by ten representatives of advice providers and community groups in the borough. The workshop gave us extensive and valuable information on a range of issues in the borough which is incorporated in the report. The attendees are included in the acknowledgments in Appendix 2.

2.3.4 PRESENTATION OF EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The Equalities Impact Assessment was prepared as an integral part of this work. It is however published as a separate document and for that reason is presented here as an Appendix rather than a chapter of the report.

3 BARNET IN CONTEXT: SOCIO-ECONOMIC & DEMOGRAPHIC

3.1 BARNET: BACKGROUND AND UK CONTEXT

Barnet’s population is projected to increase from an estimated 345,800 in 2010 to 378,883 in 2020.¹ It has the second greatest religious diversity of any borough in Britain with a notably large Jewish population. Similarly, there is a notably large Chinese population.² These are not however the largest groups shown in the analysis provided by the borough (below) which are Indian and Black African ethnic groups.

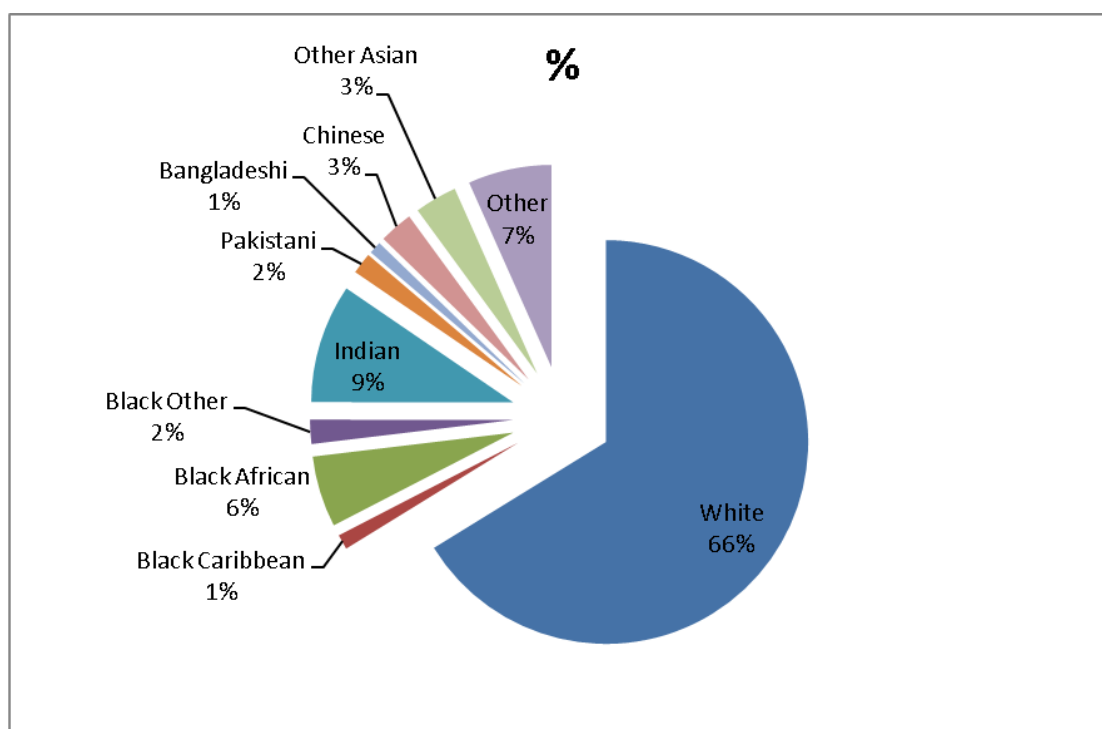


FIGURE 1: ETHNICITY 2010 PROJECTIONS³

The 2001 census showed that of the 59.86% of the population were white British - the total white figure then being 74.03%. While these are the current projections participants in the consultation process expressed concern at their accuracy. We do however have data on the schools population in 2010 which is presented in full below. While this strictly represents children only, it has been cross checked by the borough against other recent population data including adult populations and is believed to be a good representation of the whole population.

¹ Hybrid Population Projections, London Borough of Barnet 2009 based on ONS and GLA projections.

² Barnet Area Assessment, Oneplace, The Audit Commission, December 2009

³ GLA 2008 Ethnic Group Population Projections

Ethnicity	Proportion
White - British	19.43%
White - English	13.36%
Indian	6.40%
White Eastern European	3.96%
Black - Somali	2.94%
Any Other Mixed Background	2.87%
Any Other White Background	2.68%
Black - Nigerian	2.33%
White Western European	2.25%
Other Black African	2.19%
Black Caribbean	2.03%
Iranian	2.02%
Afghan	2.01%
Pakistani	1.97%
Black - African	1.88%
White - Irish	1.69%
Any Other Asian Background	1.64%
White and Asian	1.61%
Greek/ Greek Cypriot	1.58%
White and Black Caribbean	1.53%
Any Other Ethnic Group	1.50%
White and Black African	1.36%
Black - Ghanaian	1.25%
Any Other Black Background	1.16%
Sri Lankan Tamil	1.10%
Chinese	1.10%
Any Other Asian Background	1.02%
Kosovan	0.94%
Bangladeshi	0.91%
Any Other White Background	0.90%
Turkish/ Turkish Cypriot	0.89%
Refused	0.88%
Any Other Ethnic Group	0.82%
Japanese	0.77%
Greek Cypriot	0.63%

Information Not Yet Obtained	0.59%
Other White British	0.56%
Albanian	0.55%
Latin/ South/ Central American	0.41%
Turkish	0.38%
Hong Kong Chinese	0.37%
Any Other Mixed Background	0.36%
White European	0.35%
Kurdish	0.32%
Italian	0.30%
Arab Other	0.29%
Other Chinese	0.29%
Greek	0.27%
Sri Lankan Sinhalese	0.24%
White and Any Other Ethnic Group	0.21%
Filipino	0.19%
Portuguese	0.17%
Any Other Black Background	0.17%
White and Any Other Asian Background	0.16%
Iraqi	0.16%
Turkish Cypriot	0.14%
Black and Any Other Ethnic Group	0.13%
Black - Congolese	0.12%
African Asian	0.11%
Asian and Any Other Ethnic Group	0.10%
Egyptian	0.10%
Traveller of Irish Heritage	0.09%
Black - Angolan	0.09%
Black European	0.09%
White - Scottish	0.08%
Other Pakistani	0.08%
Moroccan	0.08%
Bosnian- Herzegovinian	0.07%
White - Welsh	0.07%
Chinese and Any Other Ethnic Group	0.06%
Nepali	0.06%
Black - Sierra Leonean	0.05%
White and Chinese	0.05%

Black - Sudanese	0.05%
White and Indian	0.05%
Malaysian Chinese	0.04%
Lebanese	0.04%
Korean	0.03%
Thai	0.03%
Kashmiri Pakistani	0.03%
Serbian	0.03%
Malay	0.02%
Croatian	0.02%
Sri Lankan Other	0.02%
Asian and Chinese	0.02%
Libyan	0.02%
Gypsy / Roma	0.02%
Taiwanese	0.01%
Polynesian	0.01%
Asian and Black	0.01%
Yemeni	0.01%
Mirpuri Pakistani	0.01%
Black North American	0.01%
Black and Chinese	0.01%
White and Pakistani	0.01%
Vietnamese	0.01%
Singaporean Chinese	0.00%
White - Cornish	0.00%
Grand Total	100.00%

Source: School Census 2010⁴

We wholly endorse the view expressed in consultation that EU migrant workers bring special needs for advice, employment rights, housing and benefits.

3.2 DEPRIVATION IN BARNET - AN ENGLISH CONTEXT

Barnet became more relatively deprived between 2004 and 2007 and is now ranked 128th of 354 English boroughs. ⁵ Barnet is now less deprived in education, skills and

⁴ Supplied by Chief Executive's Service, London Borough of Barnet

⁵ English Indices of Deprivation 2004 and 2007, Department for Communities and Local Government

training, yet more deprived in all other areas than before. Examining the data at lower super output area level (LSOA) shows that six LSOA's in Barnet are in England's most 10% deprived. It must be stressed that this is indicative of *relative* change compared with other local authorities rather than *absolute* change over that period.

3.3 DEPRIVATION IN BARNET - A LONDON CONTEXT

While Barnet is more deprived than the average English local authority area, it is somewhat less deprived than the average London Borough. Of its immediate neighbours, it is more deprived than Harrow, somewhat less deprived than Enfield and Camden, considerably less than Brent and very much less deprived than Haringey.

TABLE 1: BARNET SOAS IN MOST DEPRIVED 10% IN 2007

Table 2 IMD Domain	No. of Barnet's 210 SOAs in top 10% most deprived nationally
Barriers to housing and services	197
Outdoors living environment	36
Crime and disorder	16
Income	13
Employment	1
Health & disability	0
Education & skills	0

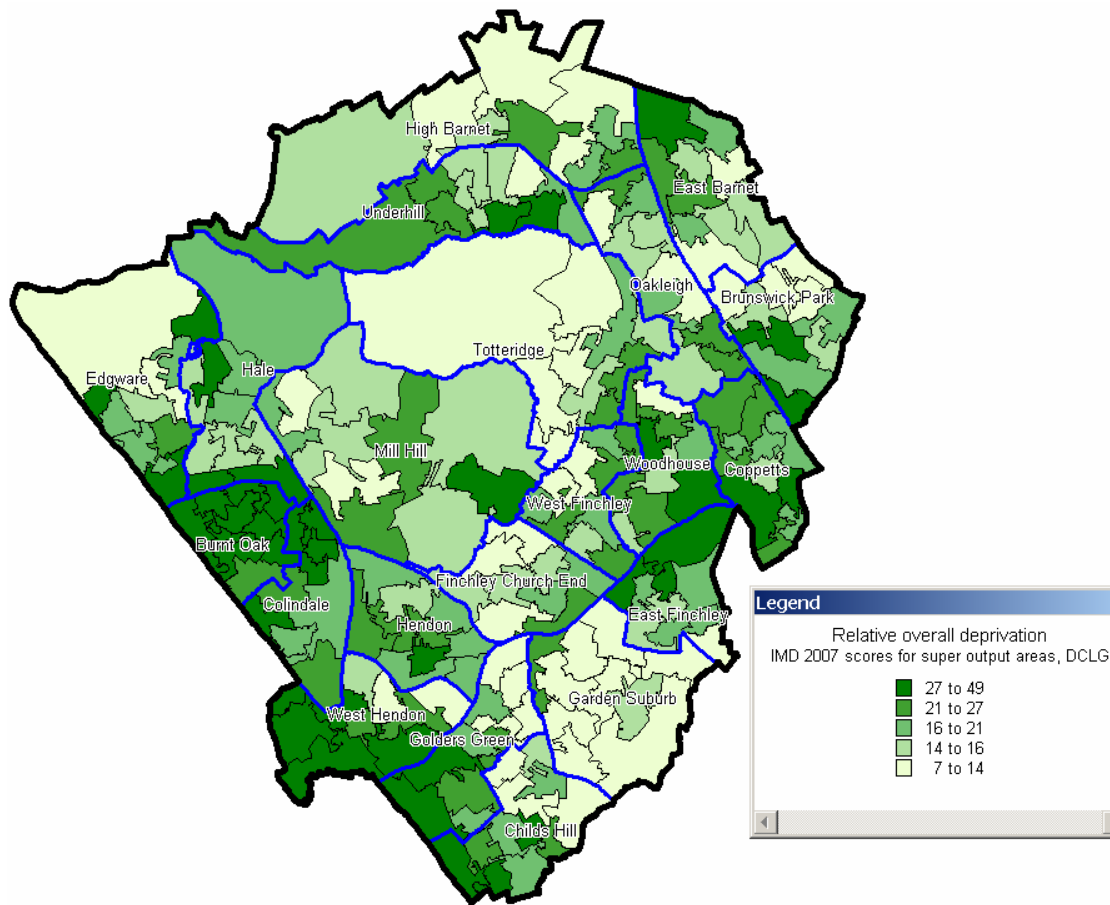
- **Income** - Barnet is in the most deprived 46% of English local authority areas
- **Employment** - while Barnet remains in the less deprived half, it is no longer in the least deprived third as was the case.
- **Health Deprivation/Disability** - Barnet is in the least deprived third
- **Education, Skills and Training** - uncharacteristically given the other factors Barnet is the least deprived 20% of local authority areas and this is particularly so for children and young people. 82% of schools inspected in the last year were 'good' or better.

3.4.2 GEOGRAPHY OF DEPRIVATION IN BARNET

The Council has already conducted a thorough investigation of this and published its results.⁹ Deprivation in Barnet is concentrated along the western border of the borough, particularly towards the south and in the east of the borough with pockets in the north.

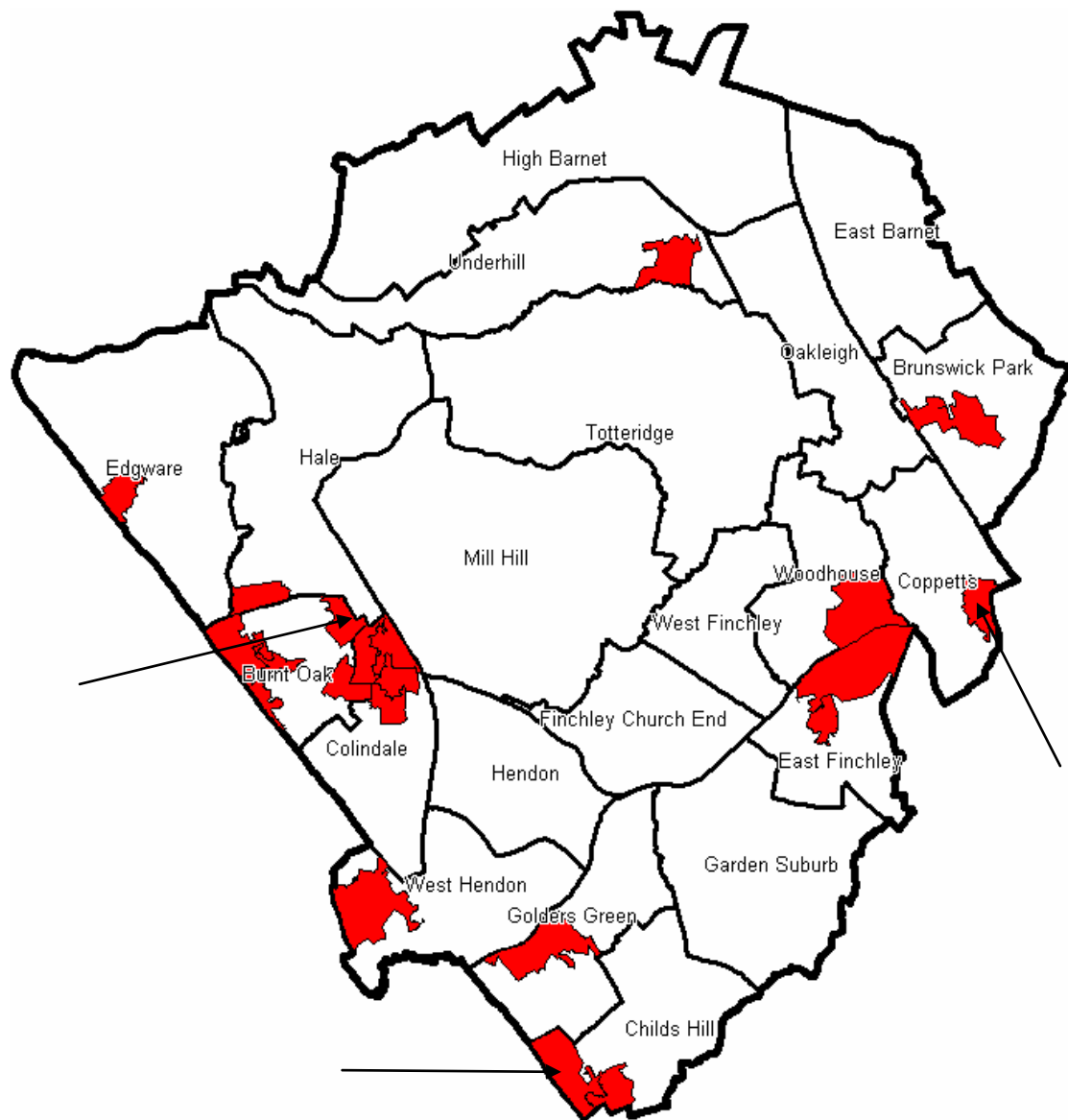
⁹ Deprivation in Barnet, Business Intelligence Team, London Borough of Barnet

Map 2: IMD scores for SOAs in Barnet, 2007¹⁰



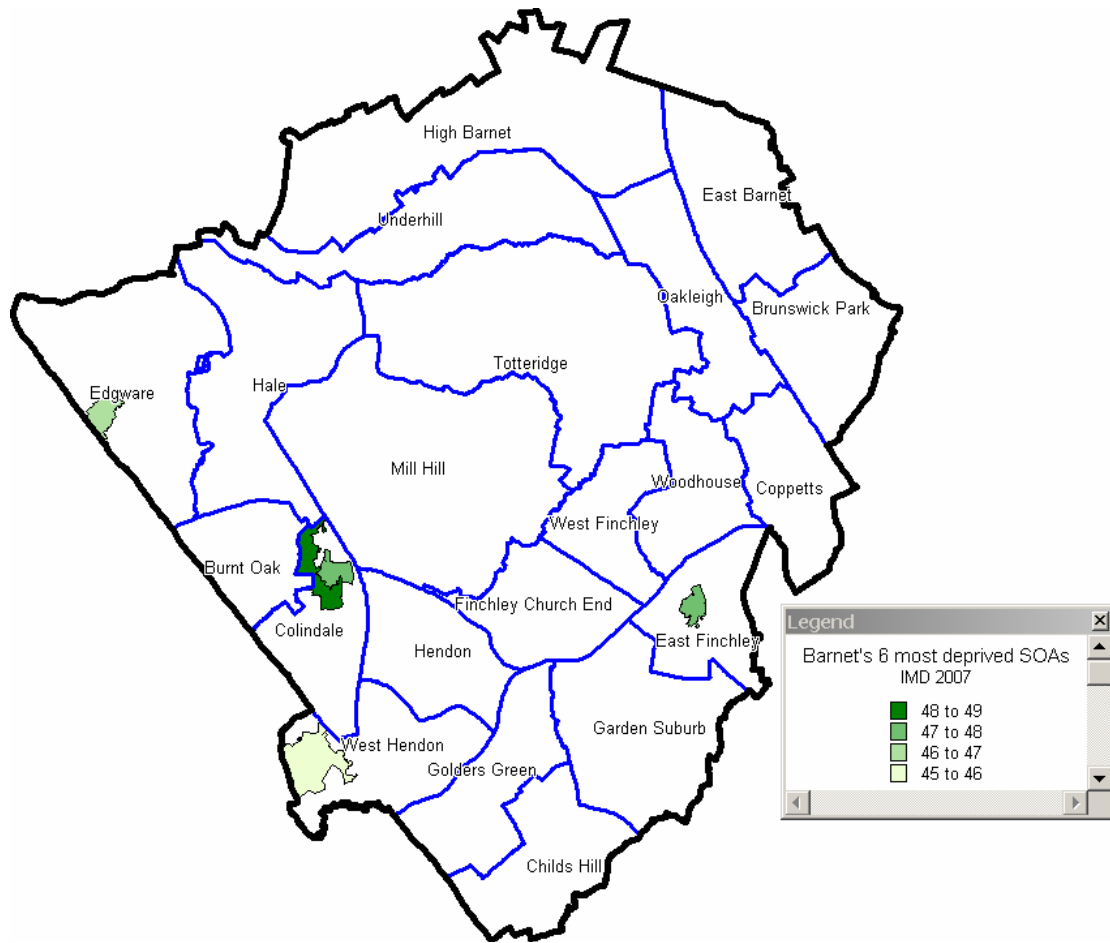
¹⁰ Deprivation in Barnet, London Borough of Barnet. © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. London Borough of Barnet. OS Licence No. LA1000 17674 2010

Map 3: Barnet's 20 most deprived SOAs, with 3 2007 additions (see arrows)¹¹



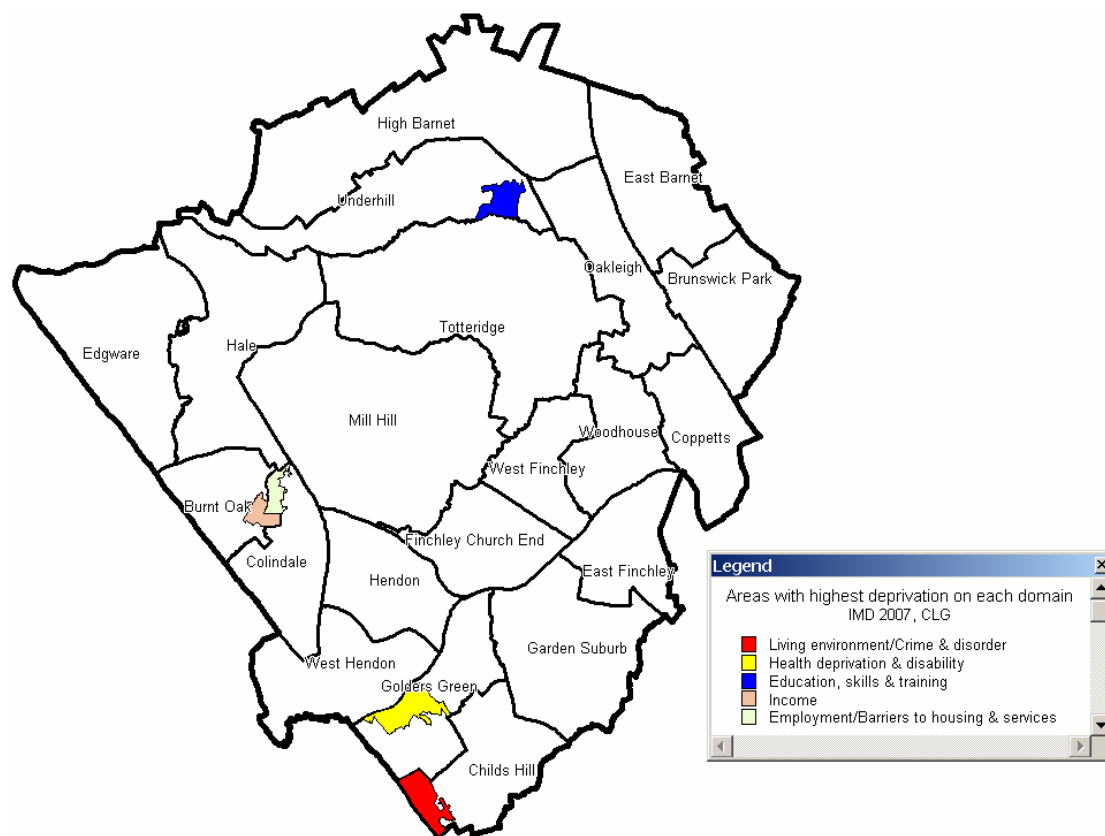
¹¹ Deprivation in Barnet, London Borough of Barnet, © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. London Borough of Barnet. OS Licence No. LA1000 17674 2010

Map 4: the six Barnet SOAs that are within the 10% most deprived nationally¹²



¹² Deprivation in Barnet, London Borough of Barnet, © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. London Borough of Barnet. OS Licence No. LA1000 17674 2010

Map 5: Barnet SOAs with the highest deprivation for each domain¹³



The locations of deprivation have changed little between the 2004 and 2007 surveys with Burnt Oak and Colindale heading the list by a clear margin and equally clearly, Totteridge and Garden Suburb remaining at the other end of the scale. However, the concentration of deprivation is increasing with growing “hotspots” reflected by the presence of six of the 210 SOA’s in England’s most deprived 10%.

3.4.3 AGE OF DEPRIVATION IN BARNET

There has been an increase in deprivation for both older people (60+) and children (0-15), though the accuracy of this is questionable. The Council has mapped this and shown that the deprivation pattern is similar to the population as a whole except for the Mill Hill areas which show an increase in deprivation of children and a slight increase in deprivation for older people in West Finchley and Hendon.

¹³ Deprivation in Barnet, London Borough of Barnet, © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. London Borough of Barnet. OS Licence No. LA1000 17674 2010

3.4.4 SERVING BARNET

Barnet lacks the traditional centre which many boroughs have and the Audit Commission¹⁴ identifies 29 smaller town centres and the regional shopping centre of Brent Cross. This presents particular challenges in serving the borough as there is a lack of a central hub on which to focus services that are too small to effectively spread through every locality.

3.5 CHANGING DEMOGRAPHY AND THE NEED FOR ADVICE

Based on the foregoing, Barnet:

- Will require a level of advice somewhat above the norm for an English local authority area.
- There may be no natural hub from which the whole borough can effectively be served.
- Has a concentration of need along its western border with significant areas in the east and pockets in the north. There are some variations across the age spectrum but these are probably not such as to affect service design for service of the intensity proposed. Service locations must ensure that these areas have ready access to existing and/or proposed services.
- Has significant income deprivation which is reflected well in the brief for the design of the new service.
- May have specific housing and accommodation issues which, while requiring analysis and decisions away from the field of advice, have ramifications for the type of advice needed.

¹⁴ Barnet Area Assessment, Oneplace, The Audit Commission, December 2009

4 ADVICE IN THE 2010's

4.1 IMPACT OF ADVICE

In March 2006 the government published the report "Getting earlier, better advice to vulnerable people" outlining the Department of Constitutional Affairs strategy for helping people better resolve the problems they face. It gives examples of the evidence which demonstrates the damaging affect of unresolved problems on people's lives:

*"Unresolved problems and disputes seriously affect people's lives. There are significant knock on costs to public services, especially the NHS, Department of work and pensions and the police....For more vulnerable people, advice can be effective in helping them resolve their problems and disputes."*¹⁵

A lack of access to reliable legal advice can be a contributing factor in the creation and maintenance of social exclusion¹⁶. Furthermore, poor access to advice means that some of the most vulnerable members of the community are unable to enforce their legal rights effectively and/or are not aware of their rights and responsibilities in the first place.

The 2006 report *The Case for Advice*¹⁷ outlines the contribution advice makes to communities and finds it has a 'positive impact' on four aspects of people's lives:

- Fairness and community cohesion
- Economic benefits and social inclusion
- Health
- Improving public services

Disadvantaged people in particular need to be able to assert their rights and have equal access to justice. Advice and law centres provide important access points to legal advice for the most disadvantaged communities.

In 2005 the LSC published the study *Causes of Civil Action: Civil Law and Social*

¹⁵ DCA. Getting earlier better advice to vulnerable people. March 2006.

¹⁶Legal and Advice Services: A Pathway out of Social Exclusion, Lord Chancellor's Department and Law Centres Federation, 2001.

¹⁷ Advice Services Alliance; Case for Advice. August 2006. www.asauk.org.uk

*Justice*¹⁸. This is an in-depth study into civil justice problems, conducted by the Legal Services Research Centre. The research found that:

- Solving civil legal problems early can reduce demand on other public services
- There is a close relationship between legal ‘justiciable’ problems and deprivation
- Advice and legal services play an important role in the fight against social exclusion

The Legal Services Research Centre estimates that the cost of civil justice problems to individuals, health and public services amounts to £13 billion over a 3½ year period.

The research also demonstrated strong links between civil law problems and ill-health,¹⁹ which found that over a third of civil justice problems led to adverse physical and mental health consequences.

Advice agencies help put money in people’s pockets and this is mostly spent in local stores on food, household repairs and on children²⁰. Research conducted by MORI found Citizens Advice Bureaux increased the income of over one third of their clients.²¹

In addition to “direct” outcomes such as increased benefit income, advice can often have a range of wider beneficial effects on clients. Legal and advice services not only enable citizens to access their full rights and entitlements “but have a significant impact on ensuring people can access local services and support”²² leading to:

- Enhanced sense of overall well-being;
- Reduced stress, anxiety or depression;
- Improvements to physical health;
- Greater sense of overall control over one’s life;

¹⁸ See 4.

¹⁹ Causes of Action: Civil Law and Social Justice. (2nd edition) 2006. Pascoe Pleasance. Legal Services Research Centre. Published by the LSC. p.60

²⁰ Bristol Debt Advice Centre Annual Review 2002-3.

²¹ Unmet Demand for Citizens Advice Bureaux. Research Study for Citizens Advice. 2003/4. MORI Social Research Institute.

²² Regeneration and Renewal: A Good Practice Guide for London Advice Agencies. April 2002. London Advice Services Alliance

- Greater capacity for and interest in social, cultural and community engagement;
- Improved ability to engage in and maintain paid or unpaid work.

Research has found that maximising benefit income has a positive impact on the claimant's health and well-being and their ability to engage in society and contribute to the local economy. For example increased local benefit levels can have a direct impact on the local economy and improve central government's calculations (Formula Spending Share) of the Formula Grant to Local Authorities²³. This is weighted to take into account certain proxy indicators of need. These indicators include the number of people receiving Income Support and Attendance Allowance²⁴.

Other research²⁵ conducted in Scotland found that one job is created for every £41,000 of benefit expenditure raised. The jobs created are also locally situated which further contributes to area-based regeneration strategies.

4.2 A CHANGING NATIONAL CONTEXT

4.2.1 FIXED FEES AND UNIFIED CONTRACTS

From October 2007, the LSC introduced a system of fixed fees for civil Legal Aid, which includes one nationally fixed fee for each category of legal help. Once this fee has been exceeded, no further case work will be paid for unless it is seen as an 'exceptional case'. There are concerns surrounding this limit, including that:

- Some suppliers may avoid long, difficult and complex cases and clients;
- Work may well be started and not finished;
- Cases with language or mental health problems may not get the support they require due to additional resource needs.

²³ For example, each Attendance Allowance award increases grant for services to older people by £1010. However, this may not translate directly into exact extra money because numerous other calculations are performed which can offset these gains. See www.local.communities.gov.uk/finance/0607/table3045/t3_r603.htm.

²⁴ See Glossary for definition.

²⁵ Fraser of Allander Institute for Research on the Scottish Economy (2001 & 2003): Impact of Welfare Spending on the Glasgow Economy. University of Strathclyde.

The Advice Services Alliance²⁶ believes that:

“There is a real risk that the introduction of fixed fees will drive out some good suppliers who feel unable to deliver quality services within the fixed fees proposed, while retaining some high volume suppliers who may not be providing quality services.”²⁷

In April 2007, Steve Hynes, then Director of the Law Centres federation commented:

“Some Law Centres say they can make fixed fees work, but it will mean doing less complex cases and less strategic work, such as legal education and campaigning. Others say it will mean cuts of up to 20% in real terms.”²⁸

No authoritative research is available to demonstrate the impact of this. The current round of tendering is now in a difficult position both as the LSC lost a challenge in the High Court on its allocation of family law contracts²⁹ and as the LSC itself is to cease to exist as Non Departmental body and become an Executive agency of the Ministry of Justice.³⁰ It is noted that London Borough of Barnet has not given any indication that it is likely to use a fixed fee basis in any specialist work that it may procure.

4.2.2 COMMUNITY LEGAL ADVICE CENTRES & NETWORKS

In July 2005 the LSC published *Making Legal Rights a Reality*,³¹ a five-year strategy for the development of the Community Legal Service. This is based around Community Legal Advice Centres (CLACS) and Community Legal Advice Networks (CLANS). The LSC is not at present canvassing for further CLACs to be commissioned and in any case the London Borough of Barnet has already decided against pursuing this approach and it is thus not explored further here.

4.2.3 FUNDING

This review is being conducted against a background of economic recession and

²⁶ Advice Services Alliance - the national membership network of advice providers including Advice UK, Citizens Advice, Shelter, Age Concern.

²⁷ “Fixed Fees, Equality and Diversity: ASA Policy Paper. June 2007.

²⁸ Independent lawyer. April 2007.

²⁹ High Court of Justice; Queen’s Bench Division; The Queen, on the application of The Law Society of England and Wales - and - The Legal Services Commission CO/9207/10

³⁰ www.direct.gov.uk 14 October 2010

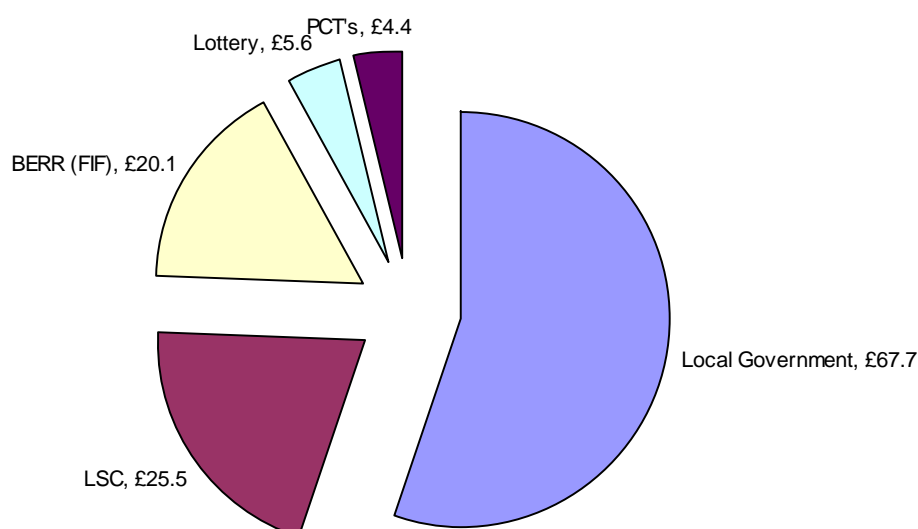
³¹ Making legal rights a reality. The LSC’s Strategy for the Community Legal Service. LSC. July 2005.

uncertain pace of recovery and a consequent political landscape making public sector budget cuts inevitable. Further, the recession has particularly hit the banking sector which impacts adversely on the capacity of charitable trusts to maintain or expand their funding.

Against this the NHS's aim to become a health service rather than a sickness treatment service provides new opportunities for the funding of advice to meet initiatives set out in their Commissioning Strategy Plans. However, in spite of the NHS budget being ring-fenced the current uncertain status of Primary Care Trusts and plans for their abolition outlined in the NHS White Paper in July indicates that the NHS is unlikely to be a source of new funding in the short term. However the local authorities' proposed new duties in relation to public health and closer working with GPs as commissioners of local services may present new opportunities.

Figures on funding sources are not available for the advice sector as a whole but they are available for the Voluntary Sector and for Citizens Advice Bureaux (CABx)³².

FIGURE 2: FUNDING OF CABX £M³³



³² Study of Legal Advice at Local Level, Ministry of Justice, June 2009

³³ Study of Advice at Local Level, Ministry of Justice, June 2009

Projections are somewhat contradictory with 80% of Charitable Trusts in 2009 expecting funding to hold up and two thirds expecting it to grow in the long term. It is not yet possible to examine the validity of those projections. However with 60% of businesses expecting to cut charitable giving and limited returns on investments these projections seem optimistic.

In addition, the Legal Services Commission has indicated that Legal Aid budgets are likely to be reduced and may be restructured in the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review. More details are expected to emerge during autumn 2010³⁴. Indeed the Commission itself is to be restructured into an Executive Agency of the Ministry of Justice. This may impact on how local authorities commission specialist law services, especially where the intention is to complement LSC provision.

In this environment it is imperative that funding applications can show:

- Exactly what the funder will buy with their money
- How it fits the funder's strategic objectives
- How it fits into an overall strategy for the area
- How it produces added value as part of that fit - for instance by providing a gateway to services funded by others
- How performance will be monitored and reported to the funders.

4.3 THE PRIMARY CARE TRUST AND ADVICE

Health services are key funders/providers of advice services and improved health/prevention of illness are among the most important results of advice. The relationship between the two has recently been explored in a report for Advice UK.³⁵ The following summarises briefly the advice implication of the PCT's priorities.

4.3.1 NHS BARNET'S COMMISSIONING STRATEGY³⁶

The Strategy for 2008-2013, lists eight initiatives of which the following are relevant.

Due to an unfortunate chain of circumstances, the planned interview with a representative of the trust could not take place. The recommendations below include one that a high level structural forum should exist to ensure funding dovetails to

³⁴ www.legalservices.gov.uk as at 3 November 2010

³⁵ Their Patients - Our Clients, Their Clients, Our Patients – Developing Effective Partnerships Between the NHS and the Advice Sector in England. Advice UK 2009

³⁶ Delivering Better Health in Barnet, Barnet Primary Care Trust Commissioning Strategic Plan 2008-2013

create an effective overall service (8.2.2.xii). Contact between the borough and trust could form a first part of this.

Initiative One: Improving Access and Choice in Primary Care

- Open seven Primary Care Centres (polyclinics or hubs) and at least 16 GP practices in premises as functional as purpose built premises. A “hub and spoke” model.
- Redevelop Finchley Memorial Hospital as one of the Centres
- Procure a GP led Health Centre in the South to be open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. seven days a week
- Extend Hours and services

Although advice is not specified, other services such as dentistry are seen as being available. Much of this is still in early stages of development and the opportunity for involvement at the planning stage may arise. Co-location of health and advice services may target services at particular communities of need.

Initiative Two: Providing Care Closer to Home

This sets out a range of specific clinical services to be moved to community locations and there does not seem to be a role for advice in this but it can be strongly argued that there should be such a role as part of a holistic service including preventative measures.

Initiative Three: Targeting Improvements in Health Equality and Lifestyle choices

- “Finding the 5,000” an initiative to reduce morbidity from cardiovascular disease
- Reducing obesity in adults and children
- Reducing smoking
- Improving sexual health
- Increasing childhood immunisation (MMR)
- Increasing rates of breast screening

Social marketing is seen as the “key enabler” in this initiative. Advice agencies have some role here is in disseminating information and in assisting to target communities, particularly in the sexual health area where they can provide non NHS venues where this is appropriate.

Initiative Four: Improving Maternity and Children’s Services

This includes early identification of health and social care issues, though no specific mention is made of housing or income related problems. Advice both to pregnant women and new mothers could be important. Research into the patient outcomes will be undertaken with University College London.

The second part of this initiative covers support for disabled children and will be delivered in partnership with the Borough’s Children’s Services.

Initiative Five: Improving Mental Well-Being

One local provider rated excellent by the Health Care Commission. A priority is people with mild mental illness and early intervention. Tackling inequality and social exclusion is a stated aim. There are three main components to the initiative

- Improving access to psychological therapies
- Improving dementia care
- Improving and expanding care for people with personality disorders

Initiative Six: Reducing Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease Related Hospital Admissions

This includes more home care and better follow-up for patients receiving home oxygen.

Initiative Seven: Implementing National Cardio Vascular Disease Risk Assessment and Management Programme

This is a clinically specific initiative looking at CVD and Stroke.

Initiative Eight: Supporting patients to live independently and building resilience - improving end of life care

The analysis of provider is medically based and does not consider voluntary sector providers.

Services in Barnet are part of a Local Area Agreement and of a Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Clinical Strategy and are part of the North London Collaborative Commissioning Plan. The analysis of the provider landscape takes no specific account of the community and voluntary sector as providers of services.

Unlike some PCT plans, there is no specific mention of advice's role in delivering healthier Barnet, it nonetheless highlights the role of partnership working and integrating some parts of a Community Advice Service with the Primary Care Centers should be considered.

However, it should be noted that this Strategic Plan was developed before the NHS White Paper and the incoming Government's intention to replace PCTs with GP commissioning consortia and it was not possible to ascertain whether this plan is still current.

5 NEEDS ANALYSIS

5.1 ANARAK

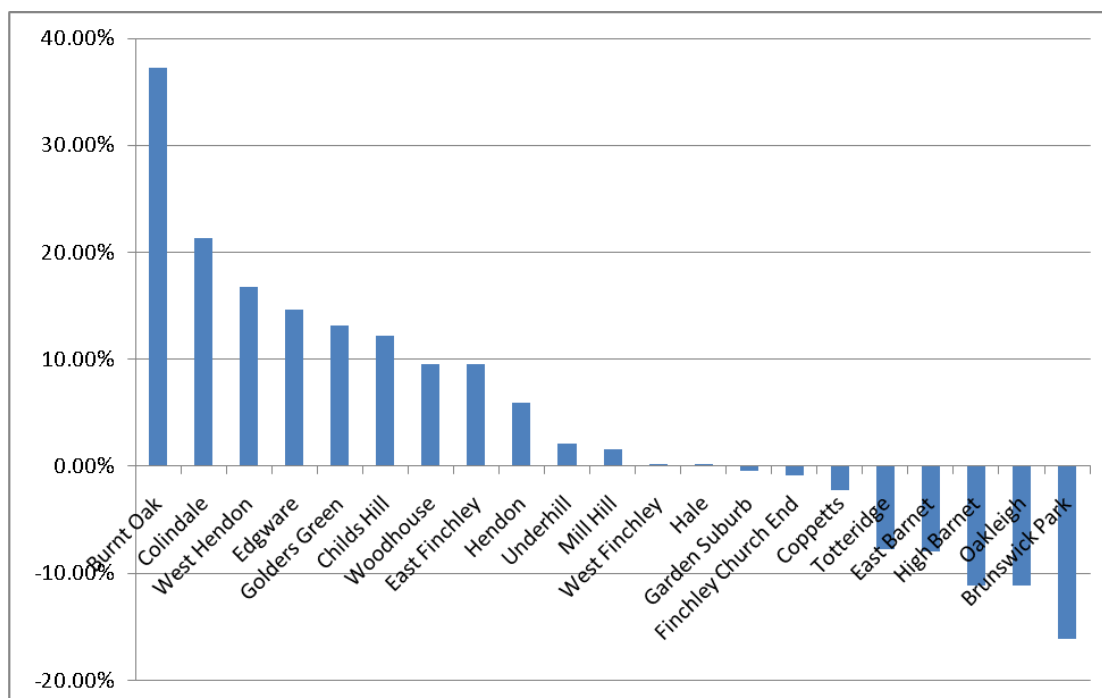
ANARAK is a tool used by MBARC to provide a proxy for advice need. It is important to separate this from demand for social welfare advice or the impact of supply. The availability of a service will generate a demand and the users of the service doubtless perceive themselves as needing it and they in most cases doubtless do need advice. In analysing advice need we are trying to look objectively at people who are most likely to be in need of social welfare advice - that is advice relating to the fundamentals of life in a modern civilised society; enough money to live on, a home, access to amenities, sustainable debt (freedom from debt is achieved by very few). A more detailed description of ANARAK methodology is appendix 3.

We have sought to use the most recent, reliable data we can for the ANARAK survey and most data is from 2008 or later. However, inevitably some census data is used and this, of course, dates from 2001. Specifically figures relating to numbers of lone parents, people with long term limiting illnesses and overcrowding use census data. Where we have not found a suitable dataset, we have used national averages. The use of averages, of course, suppresses the potential divergence, both up and down, from national average figures. We must accept that, at this part of the census cycle, our analysis has some limitations. ANARAK however is one tool for analysing advice need and should be used with both local intelligence and deprivation data to form an analysis. The broad picture which emerges from all of the sources clearly and consistently indicates a borough with higher than average need and with that need focused in particular areas of the borough.

5.1.1 DENSITY OF NEED - THE INDIVIDUAL NEED FOR ADVICE

This looks at the extent to which an individual living in a given ward is likely to need more or less than the average amount of social welfare advice. In Burnt Oak, a resident is 37 percentage points more likely to need advice than an average English resident. This is by no means an unexpected result given the indicators of deprivation discussed above.

TABLE 2: ADVICE NEED COMPARED TO NATIONAL AVERAGE (SPECIAL NEEDS MULTIPLIER)

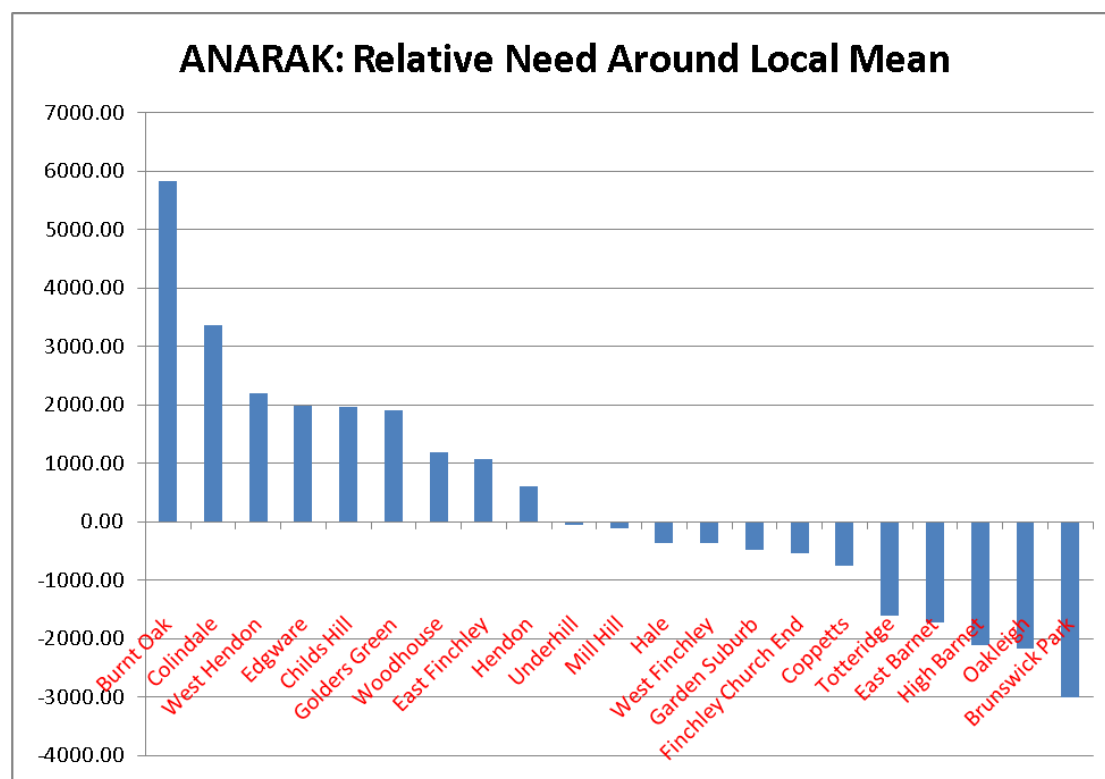


5.1.2 TOTAL NEED - THE COLLECTIVE NEED FOR ADVICE

This very simply applies the Special Needs Multiplier to the populations of the wards concerned. Barnet’s wards have populations varying from 15,388 to (High Barnet) to 19,326 (Childs Hill) but this results only in slight changes in ranking of need for advice³⁷. Childs Hill moves above Golders Green - from 6th to 5th in the total need calculation due to its larger population. Hale and West Finchley similarly change places in 11th and 12th ranks. The effect is not significant. This data has been presented below.

³⁷ London Borough of Barnet, Business Intelligence Team – Based on GLA estimates

TABLE3: RELATIVE NEEDS BY WARD



5.2 OTHER INDICATORS OF NEED

Socio-economic data summarised in part 3 of this report indicates very much the same geographic pattern of need. The congruence of the borough’s analysis of deprivation and our analysis of need for advice is very strong. The statistical and objective data all points to the needs being mostly in the west of the borough.

All interviewees confirmed this either from their own data and information systems or from subjective impressions and often both. The interviews were useful in identifying pockets of need within relatively affluent wards which fail to show up in ward level analysis. Grahame Park, Stonegrove/Spur Road, West Hendon and Dollis Valley were highlighted by borough staff and advice sector interviewees. There was a level of surprise that Underhill did not exhibit slightly higher need at ward level.

5.3 COUNCIL PERFORMANCE

Councils which perform badly in certain key areas find that much of their funding to the advice sector is taken up in correcting omissions and errors in their own serve delivery, particularly in respect of Housing and Council Tax benefits. In its final

Comprehensive Performance Assessment³⁸ (2008), Barnet scored three stars for performance and was rated improving strongly overall. Perhaps most importantly for this report it scored a maximum four stars for its benefit performance. The more recent Comprehensive Area Assessment (December 2009)³⁹, while not providing the same level of detail, rates the area as “progressing well”. We conclude that there is not a high level of unproductive use of advice budgets spent pursuing council decisions. Consultation confirmed this perception.

The use of temporary accommodation remains relatively high, but this is a necessary consequence of being a council with ambitious regeneration plans. Since April 2008 the numbers in temporary accommodation has fallen from 2424 in April 2002 to 2150 now of which 43% are on regeneration estates. Those in temporary accommodation on the regeneration estates benefit from low rents and an arrangement which provides accommodation for a number of years. However, looking ahead, with cuts due to be implemented to housing benefit there could be a need to provide more advice and assistance to mitigate against a potential increase in homelessness.

This taken with housing factors discussed under deprivation in part 3 of the report suggests a high need not just for housing advice but for benefit and debt issues which often accompany the lack of a permanent home. Again consultation confirmed this.

5.4 POLICY IMPERATIVES

The Local Strategic Partnership has four themes, summarised as⁴⁰:

- Growing Successfully
- Safer, Stronger, Cleaner Barnet
- Investing in Children and Young People
- Healthy Barnet - including older people.

The proposed service sets out to meet the needs of Barnet’s 2008 - 2018 Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Plan - specifically

- Help People to lead successful lives
- Support people (especially vulnerable people) in being independent and

³⁸ Comprehensive Performance Assessment 2008, The Audit Commission

³⁹ Barnet Area Assessment, Oneplace, The Audit Commission, December 2009

⁴⁰ Barnet Area Assessment, Oneplace, The Audit Commission, December 2009

enabling them to help themselves by dealing with their civil, legal, financial and other problems by informing them of their legal rights and responsibilities

- Prevent the deterioration of people’s life situations and reduce the call on public services (including more intensive aspects of the service to be delivered under [the proposed] contract)
- Tackle disadvantage by securing an improved quality of life for those experiencing multiple disadvantage
- Contribute to the development of a sustainable economy, for example through the relief of poverty, reduction of debt, increased benefits take-up and active signposting to suitable employment advice.

The key changes from the present system are summarised below.⁴¹

Existing service	New service to be tendered for
Grant funding for multiple organisations providing an advice service.	Single contract, though may include sub-contractors.
Services are funded where they offer an appropriate service in their own right.	The service is being commissioned against a detailed specification. The Contractor should configure the Service so that it complements other available services, both local and national.
Existing budget.	Budget to be determined
Broad grant conditions.	Regular performance management and monitoring with agreed indicators.
Open to all within the parameters of the Service provided.	Tenderers / contractor are encouraged to target resources in line with the Objectives set out here and the needs analysis carried out by the Council. This may mean not dealing with all enquiry types or all levels of the ‘hierarchy’.
Generally, clients are left to approach service at will.	Contractor to build in a preventative approach, both in configuring the service and in resource allocation. This may mean moving resources ‘upstream’. Contractor to

⁴¹ Community Advice Service 2011 – 2014 Draft Specification as at the start of this research, London Borough of Barnet, 2010

	be clear on approach to encouraging residents to seek advice early.
Clients are increasingly triaged to make best use of resources.	The Contractor will take a robust approach to encouraging self-help, building confidence and providing the tools to support this, while ensuring help is available to those who most need it.
Services tend to be provided face-to-face, increasingly with increasing telephone support.	Services will move to cheaper channels including e-mail and web-based services where appropriate for the customer, in line with the Council's approach to customer service.
Providers operate primarily from their own premises (with outreach as appropriate).	Contractor aims to co-locate with other public services (with outreach as appropriate).
The Council provided 'second tier' welfare benefits advice to other advisers (until February 2010).	The Contractor acts as the lead provider and local expert on welfare benefits and provides second tier advice and training on a range of topics.

*Looking After Yourself - a prevention framework for Barnet*⁴² is the Council's prevention framework for adult social care. It has first in its list:

- Local advice and information services that people can access throughout the borough to find out about low level support services that promote well-being and independence.

Over half of the voluntary sector agencies discussed in the paper gave advice on some level but this report is concerned not with these but with agencies set up to give specific social welfare advice as a primary function.

5.5 CURRENT & PLANNED PROVISION

It is not part of this report to review or comment on the performance of the current

⁴² Review of Third Sector Prevention Services and Future Procurement Planning, Discussion

advice services in the borough. However, it is essential that the Community Advice Service fits in to the landscape of advice providers in such a way as to offer as near to a holistic, comprehensive service as possible. It must fill important gaps and not duplicate. It should also be stressed that data from agencies is not compatible with that from other agencies and is presented as illustrative of the work carried out and not for comparative purposes between agencies. The data following is based on statistical information provided by the London Borough of Barnet. Where any comment based on interviews with the agencies concerned is added, this is indicated.

5.5.1 BARNET LAW SERVICE

In the period April to June 2010, Barnet Law Service employed two solicitors and two caseworkers, one of each being part-time. They also employed (all part-time) an executive director, trainee solicitor, administrator and receptionist. They retain a number of regular volunteers. The service takes cases by referral only. They took 377 calls, 109 for advice, 168 were signposted, the balance relating to existing clients. They opened 58 matters as cases, closing 86 cases and representing 15 people in courts and tribunals. No significance should be attached to case closures exceeding openings, save that effective case management is in place and matters are not simply left open. 332 matters were open at that time. The division of law cases by subject is outlined below. 27% of the Service's funding for 2010/2011 comes directly from the London Borough of Barnet. Other sources include London Councils and the Legal Services Commission. The Law Services gains for 2009/10 included £116,697 in welfare benefits and £98,725 in employment settlements.

TABLE 4: LIVE CASES BY CATEGORY OF LAW - BARNET LAW SERVICE

	Number Of Cases	%
Immigration/Asylum	139	42%
Housing	77	23%
Employment	71	21%
Welfare Benefits	45	14%

5.5.2 BARNET CAB

This is by far the largest of Barnet's advice services. The Bureau has four bases in New Barnet, Finchley, Hendon and Grahame Park together with various outreach locations including North London Hospice, County Court, Barnet House, Burnt Oak Library and several Children's Centres. The CAB and the Council's Insight Service provided a wealth of mapped detail showing where clients came from and for what advice. In summary this shows that the CAB service usage does broadly reflect the anticipated need geographically with Burnt Oak and Colindale wards being two of the three most represented (West Hendon being the third).

Their Welfare Benefits project opened 133 new issues, seeing 59 new clients in the April to June 2010 quarter. 78.2% were benefit matters would be expected, 12% debt matters. Benefit matters were dominated by DLA/AA (46%). Although 20% of clients did not give an ethnicity, there is a good spread of the major BME groups in the returns. The CAB reports that numbers of people advised have risen by 50% in the past year.

In our view, the Bureau's Advice Barnet helpline has developed the triage approach very positively and considerably increased its effectiveness by so doing. Depending on the experience and approach of the new provider, the CAB may have much to teach the new service about designing a service to effectively handle initial contacts, diagnose problems, take appropriate action or make referrals.

We have not examined this in detail but the information presented by the Bureau suggests that it has been very effective in getting the right advice to the right people and indeed the right people to the right advice.

5.5.3 EAST FINCHLEY ADVICE SERVICE

The service did not wish to speak to us in the course of this research. They did however take part in the Co-operative Enquiry workshop. Of 195 enquiries we were able to analyse, the following percentages represent their work by subject area. The "other" category includes family matters, consumer law and education. Approximately one third of clients were resident unsurprisingly in the N2 postcode area with significant numbers for neighbouring N11 and N12. Others were from a wide range of postcodes.

The areas of advice undertaken by EFAS are set out in the table below

Benefits	35.38%
Debt	10.77%
Employment	6.67%
Housing	15.38%
Immigration	5.64%
Other	26.15%

5.5.4 AFRICAN REFUGEE COMMUNITY

The Centre sees a little over 40 clients a month for advice, signposting approximately half of these on, most frequently to lawyers. The most frequent call on their services is for “advocacy/completion of forms/translation/interpretation”, followed closely by Immigration and Social Conflict/Crime.⁴³ Users come primarily from the widely scattered N22, HA8, EN5, NW9 and N2 postcodes. More men than women are seen (58%)

5.5.5 IRANIAN COMMUNITY CENTRE

This Centre sees around 35 people a month for advice; around 58% of them are men. Where they come from is not known except that the vast majority are from Barnet with a few clients from surrounding boroughs. “Welfare” is the main category of advice followed by Immigration.

There are, of course, a number of agencies who provide some level of advice to some parts of the community but this provision is not their sole or main purpose and they are not included in this survey.

5.5.6 LEGAL SERVICES COMMISSION (LSC) FUNDING OF PRIVATE PRACTICE

The Community Legal Service website⁴⁴ shows two solicitor providers of specialist social welfare advice within 10 miles of Barnet, none located within the borough, the nearest being Brent. For the highest level of work which requires only very occasional appointments, this may be acceptable. However it is far from ideal. Nonetheless we understand that the Commission have advised the borough that it considers that need

⁴³ Quarterly monitoring sheet supplied to the Council for three months April to June 2010

⁴⁴ www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk

at this level was 90% met and following the issue of new contracts this should rise further. It should be noted that this refers only to the need for people with sufficiently restricted means to qualify for publicly funded legal help (“legal aid”).

The Borough’s providers of specialist advice do not consider this assessment of the level of coverage to be accurate even for those who are eligible for the Commission’s financial assistance. In our view, this is highly likely to be true but we can offer no statistical evidence to support this. They point to the influence of fixed fees on solicitors’ choices concerning which clients they will take on and which they won’t.

It must be emphasised that the Commission’s funding leaves many of the “income poor but asset rich” without advice - for example anyone with assets including equity in their home in excess of £100,000 is ineligible for their support. In a borough with high property values, this leaves owners of the most modest homes dependant on funding from other sources for advice. This is particularly an issue for older home owners living on small pensions but it also affects others with significant equity in their homes across the community.

The LSC’s funding must not be seen as meeting the need for specialist level advice for those who cannot afford to buy it. There remains a continuing need for this advice to be provided to citizens of Barnet and clearly this needs to be funded. The future availability of different funding sources is currently uncertain. Nonetheless, we do not see specialist level advice as the main priority for the borough’s funding of the Community Advice Service. We feel a greater impact for a greater number of residents can be achieved by focusing on the type of service set out in section 6 on page 50.

5.5.7 CONTRIBUTION OF NATIONAL, REMOTE AND SELF HELP MODELS OF ADVICE

There are a growing number of websites and helplines available which can offer support to the right people. These include services such as National Debtline and CASHflow. CASHflow is a newly launched supported self-help package for people in debt. This project developed by the Money Advice Trust offers a useful half-way house between self-help and advice.

Many of these services provide excellent advice to those who can use them and it is appropriate to signpost significant numbers of users to them. Signposting to these

where appropriate should be part of the triage process.

Such services rarely offer casework or ongoing support, relying instead on a self help model. This renders them best suited to clients with good spoken and written English, a relatively high level of self esteem / confidence and assertiveness and a basic understanding of legal frameworks and rights. They are not able to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged citizens.

5.6 GAPS & THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY ADVICE SERVICE

5.6.1 AREAS OF LAW

Citizens Advice report that nationally the demand for the services of their bureaux is now led by demand for advice on debt at 34% of enquiries, having overtaken welfare benefits which now represent 29% of enquiries⁴⁵. Employment is the next highest category. There may be reasons for this other than the pure demand for debt advice such as the number of Financial Inclusion Fund funded projects operating in the debt field. Almost all debt cases require a benefit check.

Interviewees all stressed the need for this project to deliver good quality accurate benefit advice above all other areas. We would not challenge that but also flag up the need for debt advice.

Barnet has an unusually large need for Housing Advice but this is covered by a separate tendering process and it is assumed for the purposes of the report that the involvement of the Community Advice Service in Housing Advice will be minimal, though the interface with it will be very important.

While the borough is funding this service to meet the needs of its citizens, it should bear the inter-relationship with its own needs. Again following the closure of the borough's Welfare Rights Unit, separate time-limited grant funding has been made available to the CAB to provide benefit advice to clients of Adult Social Services. Clearly residents receiving services for which there is a charge are better able to meet that charge if they are in receipt of the benefits central government intends them to have. Similarly people paying rent and council tax are more able to pay these if the appropriate benefits are in payment and debts are correctly addressed.

5.6.2 BENEFITS ADVICE: THE FUTURE

As this report was being prepared, the extent of the reform of welfare benefits proposed by the government began to become apparent. While the stated aim will be maintain benefits to those seen as in genuine need, any change to the benefit system causes confusion to vulnerable people (and often to professionals too) which can lead to the most vulnerable failing to effectively claim what is rightfully theirs. This will create a need for benefit education for community agencies, other advisors and residents themselves and support through transition processes. While we do not see the Community Advice Service as providers of high level specialist support to other advice agencies, we do feel the role of disseminating basic information about the changes across the borough should be theirs and that this should include other advisors at all levels. We suggest that this role be seen as a vital function of the Community Advice Service during its initial contract and its delivery should be anticipated from the outset.

⁴⁵ Citizens Advice Annual Report 2009/2010

5.6.3 LEVELS/TYPES OF ADVICE

We consider that there are fundamentally three levels of advice which are necessary for a comprehensive service but not all need to be provided by the same provider.

- Information and signposting - where information is given without legal interpretation and users are signposted to service which can provide any detailed advice they require.
- Advice and Casework - where a legal interpretation is put on particular facts of the client's case and advice given. Where necessary the agency will intervene as a third party on the client's behalf. Referrals for higher levels of advice and advocacy may be made internally or externally.
- Advocacy - where a client is represented before tribunals and courts.

We sought the views of those we interviewed on the role of this service. Predominantly the view was that the role of this service lay in the advice and casework area.

A large proportion of the advocacy needs for people eligible for legal help (i.e. means tested legal aid) are met by solicitors and others funded by the Legal Services Commission. The Commission is understood to have advised the borough that it considers that 90% of this eligible need in Barnet is met by their funding. This is clearly not a view shared by the current providers of specialist advice and we feel this is likely to be an overestimate and by its very nature does not include those ineligible for legal help. It thus excludes homeowners with £100,000 equity, whatever their income.

The signposting and distribution of information does not require the legal knowledge of experienced and skilled advice workers and can and should be delivered by a vast range of medical, social work, youth work professionals, libraries and community groups. It would be inappropriate to use the service for this purpose.

5.6.4 SECOND TIER SUPPORT: WHO BEST FULFILS THIS ROLE?

It is not possible or necessary for everyone who needs advice to see an advice worker immediately when the need arises. We questioned the role of the Community Advice Service in delivering second tier support to other professionals. The other professionals

interviewed however indicated clearly that this would be a valued service in the borough.

We envisage this role as the provision of telephone support to other professionals but probably not to other advice workers who may need support from specialist level workers.

5.6.5 WHO NEEDS THE SERVICE, WHERE DOES IT HAVE MOST IMPACT?

5.6.5.1 Locations

It is evident from all the statistical information and all the interviews that that the area of greatest disadvantage lies down the whole west side of the borough including Stonegrove/Spur and particularly Grahame Park estates. Dollis Valley housing estate in High Barnet and West Hendon were also highlighted. Underhill was suggested as an area where need may be higher in parts than is indicated overall and this presumably reflects Dollis Valley's needs. There is perceived to be a growing problem of people in temporary accommodation in New Barnet / Friern Barnet which brings attendant benefit, debt and housing problems.

5.6.5.2 Communities

Our research would suggest that the communities most likely to be disadvantaged live in the locations outlined above. Several interviewees mentioned concerns about how the large Jewish and Chinese populations access advice but further dedicated research would be needed before any meaningful conclusions could be drawn. The new service must establish links with those (and of course, other) communities to ensure they have access to competent advice.

In parts of the west, more than half (50.6%) of the White British population are not economically active (in employment, education or training). The proportion is slightly higher for women than men.

Stakeholder interviews suggested a particular homelessness problem for people aged 16 to 24.

Stakeholder interviews also suggested that over 50's were seen as a group needing greater levels of advice. This often relates to life events such as redundancy or

retirement, declining health or the onset of disability.

All communities with language needs were considered to need help as to how they access services; in particular Somalis.

People with limited mobility or learning difficulties and carers were also mentioned by interviewees.

5.7 CORE FUNDING & THE IMPACT OF CHANGE ON THE PROVIDER LANDSCAPE

Importantly, this is neither wholly predictable nor entirely within the Council's control. It is critical that this project does not go ahead on the assumption that the existing provider landscape will remain the same - i.e. the existing providers will continue to deliver what they do from where they do but simply in reduced amounts. It would not have been possible for this research to effectively ascertain what will happen to other agencies as they may not know, may not see it in their interest to publicise their view and may be considering tendering for the new service. The key points are these.

5.7.1 CORE FUNDING

Many funders such as the Big Lottery, Charitable Trusts and other public bodies such as the Legal Services Commission have developed their funding models around the funding of very specific projects - such as benefits advice for people living with HIV or a number of cases in, say, debt. This funding provides staff and support for the work it describes. It very rarely provides any significant contribution to the cost of premises, utilities, core administration, etc.

In order to secure such funding, agencies must demonstrate that they are stable and have a source of core funding. As shown at 4.2.3 on page 25 the largest funders are the local authorities and the funding model generally assumes that the local authority will be the provider of the core funding that gives the agency medium to long term ongoing viability and thus the capacity to attract other funding.

Withdrawal of core funding thus severely threatens the ability to draw down significant additional funding into the Borough's advice agencies from other funders. It can thus have a far greater impact on capacity than just the direct consequence of the sums withdrawn by the Council. If other funders, over a period, conclude that there is not the core viability and strength to support their investment, there can be an unfortunate multiplier effect impacting on both jobs and services in the borough.

It is clearly not possible to predict the responses of other funders to individual situations but we would suggest that their criteria would include:

- The long term financial viability of the organisation. Larger organisations and those with multiple funding streams would appear to have the advantage here in that they have the capacity to reduce the scale of the operations and still

have staff and the flexibility to retain necessary expertise and a consistent, if reduced, level of service. A small agency with a single part time advice worker is unlikely to be able to sustain a budget cut and continue delivering competent advice regularly.

- Assurance that targeted funding will be used for its intended purpose. There will always be concern that funds provided to, say, employ a debt advisor for a specific community will be used to support a wider service outside that area or subsidise core administrative funding.

However committed funders are to an area, they need suppliers who can provide the service on their terms.

5.7.2 SCALE

The impact of the withdrawal of funding could be seen as inversely proportional to the size of the agency. A large agency has more flexibility in its responses - to take the extreme example an agency which has half a funded advice work post facing a cut of one third of its funding is probably in an impossible position. With the exception of the CAB, Barnet's advice agencies are small and the reductions in existing funding could have a disproportionate effect, meaning that they are no longer viable services. For such agencies withdrawal of funding may be a better option than reductions in the level of funding.

5.7.3 SOVEREIGNTY

Independent advice agencies are governed by their management committees. Clearly they are heavily influenced by what they can secure funding for but ultimately they alone must decide what they will do and from where they will do it. They must form their own view of their viability and likely liabilities. Clearly agencies can join forces to create a stronger ongoing entity, reduce back office costs etc.

Our experience suggests that often they value independence too highly to do this and in some cases choose closure.

5.7.4 PROBABLE IMPACTS

In our judgment it is unlikely that the CAB would be able to maintain all of its current four bases and the other agencies' viability would in varying degrees be threatened by

the proposed loss of core funding. It is of course open to the agencies to bid singly or in a consortium for the contract for the Community Advice Service and this in turn would, if successful, alter the likely impacts on the agency or agencies succeeding.

The key point here is that the Community Advice Service cannot simply be built to dovetail with current provision; it must be responsive to a changing environment which could change rapidly in the period in which it is being established.

6 RECOMMENDED MODEL

6.1 OPTIONS

There are a number of models for delivery of the kind of service required. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list but options include.

- i. A single centre
- ii. A hub and satellite(s)
- iii. Multiple small centres in areas of highest need
- iv. Out-posted workers attached to particular disadvantaged groups
- v. Focus on signposting, advice and casework or advocacy services

We consider that a number of sometimes competing parameters need to be considered, including:

- i. **Quality measures** - an advice service must be able to keep up to date with ever changing statute law and casework precedent. It must be able to train formally and informally and effectively supervise its staff. Experience shows that larger groups of advice workers share knowledge and update each other informally when based together in a way they cannot if isolated. The authors have seen numerous examples of small services where initial competence has dropped to unacceptable and dangerous levels. **Providing no advice is better than poor advice.** There are related issues such as reliability - the possibility of covering unexpected and planned absences.
- ii. **Access** - the service must be accessible to those who need to use it physically and in terms of communication. This can be by visiting clients in their homes, by e-mail or phone. In an ideal world advisors fluent in the client's first language (including British Sign Language) are preferable to interpreters but this is generally impossible for relatively small services and interpretation facilities are needed. A home visit from someone speaking your own language is the ideal but it is also by far the most costly. This can be taken as an argument for dispersal of language specific advisors to their target communities. We would suggest that there is a hierarchy of need here and that basic information points - such as where you can pick up leaflets or get information about services - should be available for most people within their community (walking distance for those who can walk) and that advice and casework should be provided a single public transport ride away and that travel

a little further is acceptable for specialist services and advocacy. Telephone, email and web services increase access and home visits will still remain essential for a few users.

- iii. **Quantity and cost** - It is imperative that the service has the maximum impact on disadvantage in Barnet. It must make the most efficient use of advisors' time and minimise administrative and running costs. Time spent by advisors travelling, particularly if they are driving (they cannot read case-notes and drive a car!), is unproductive paid time and reduces the number of clients the service can see. Crudely a 45 minute journey from desk to desk is one person not advised. It is easy to underestimate true journey time - it involves packing up and setting up, lifts and stairs, waiting for buses and parking as well as the perceived journey. Money in travel costs is an issue but it is the loss of skilled advisors for the period of time which is the key loss.
- iv. **Required type of work** Clearly the largest number of people are dealt with by signposting but there equally needs to be a service to signpost them to. Similarly, advice and advocacy services offer the most in depth work but can see less people. Traditional models of advice tend to offer good client care for those who get to use them but often ignore two key issues:
 - o **Prevention** - properly advised at the right time, the client may never have needed advice in that traditional manner. For example, a properly completed DLA claim form would often save an appeal involving prodigious amounts of paperwork and no little time. Doing right first time is a matter of helping people write down simple, often unpleasant, facts, not of detailed legal knowledge. Early intervention and prevention work can both save the need for advice and provide a speedier and less traumatic outcome for the user. It does however use capacity and has an adverse impact on the volume of traditional casework which can be completed. This price needs to be understood.
 - o **The queue** - rarely is an advice service able to meet demand and no services can meet it when all the potential users want it. The term queue is used loosely and can mean anything from an engaged phone line to an actual queue. At its crudest, the queue works on the philosophy that if people are desperate enough they will wait. It makes no assessment of need - does the person need to see an advisor at all or are there other ways of tackling their problem and if they do when do they need to see

one?

Our ruling parameter is always quality. Bad advice is almost always worse than no advice at all. It can lead to loss of home, loss of amenities, loss of income, family break-up and even unnecessary imprisonment. For a service to offer value for money it must be high quality service. That said, a service also fails if it cannot be used by those who need it whether that be because it is not accessible to them or because it is set up in way which does not maximise capacity. Those who need it may not be those who most want it and we have tried to focus throughout this report on need.

6.2 PREFERRED MODEL

Taking into account all the factors above and the compromises necessary, we would propose that the Community Advice Service features the following:

6.2.1 GUIDING PRINCIPLE

The aim of the service should be to provide access for all Barnet residents who need it to a single high quality service. Fragmenting the service to target it on specific groups would be counterproductive. The service must monitor its users and must take steps to contact any groups who are perceived as in need but who do not use the service and to find ways to welcome them in and enable them to access the service.

6.2.2 LOCATION(S)

- i. The service should have one main office base where all staff are located.
- ii. The service should have one main public access point. This should be located very close to the office base - ideally but not necessarily in the same building.
- iii. The main access point should have some out of office hours access to make it accessible to the "9 - 5" workforce.
- iv. The main base and main access point should be located in the west of the borough on or near a main thoroughfare and ideally somewhere where people are likely to go about their normal business - such as a market.
- v. Depending on the location of the main access point, a limited number of outposts should be set up. Ideally everyone should be able to reach one by a single public transport journey. We envisage there being no more than two or three such points all located in areas where the service maintains no administration - they would be reliant on partners for reception services. These

should be located in the areas identified as having concentrated need, such as Dollis Valley.

6.2.3 SERVICE MODEL

- i. The service must have an effective triage system whereby it can direct people immediately to more appropriate services where they exist. This should be able to make telephone, personal appointments or arrange for email correspondence. (Email is a particularly useful means of advice provision allowing for both demand management and transfer of documents but may not be accessible to all people from the communities most in need).
- ii. The core of the service should be work at the Advice and Initial Casework level. Specialist level work should be done only where there is no specialist to refer on to. It must, however, be understood that the Legal Services Commission's funding does not meet all the specialist needs and there will not always be specialists who can provide free, competent advice to refer to and decisions will need to be made about when specialist work must be done particularly where multiple clients would benefit.
- iii. Second tier advice should be offered to other professionals - social workers, careers advisors, nurses, etc. and community groups. This must be done on the basis that these professionals and groups will then pass that basic advice on to their client(s) and not simply refer on. It must increase effectiveness at first contact. The service should not seek to offer second tier advice to other advisors, that role lies with more specialist advisors.
- iv. The service should allocate a significant and ongoing resource to early intervention and prevention. It can do this in two ways.
 - Training and support for staff and volunteers at various first points of contact. To return to the DLA example this can be simply emphasising the importance of recording all the distressing and embarrassing details on forms. Many wrongly failed applications arise from people's natural reluctance to describe in detail how they have to be helped to bathe or use the toilet.
 - Using staff proactively - for instance going to a community facility to carry out benefit checks, and assist in making claims. This uses resources but prevents unnecessary disadvantage and probably debt later.
- v. The service should focus its resources on welfare benefits advice. Its advisors

should be also be trained to deal with important debts and should undertake casework on these through serious multiple debt cases which should be referred on to a specialist service. Despite the high need for housing advice, this is a specialist area covered by other contracts and only basic advice should be given. Evidence from existing providers is that there will remain a significant need for this. Basic advice on employment rights should be given but casework should be referred on to other agencies or solicitors offering more specialist advice. All immigration advice should be avoided and referred to agencies for whom that is a key part of their business. We believe that immigration advice has particular dangers when delivered by non-specialist advisors - deportation is a disastrous consequence which can all too easily follow from bad advice. Giving immigration advice would require registration with the Office of the Immigration Commissioner (OISC). Both the advice and necessary training can be extremely time consuming and we do not believe that this would be the most effective use of the resources invested in the service. Essentially we believe immigration advice is best left to the specialists. This view does depend on who the new provider is. Should it be an agency or consortium which delivers specialist level casework in employment or immigration as part of its non Council funded business, the concerns about competence and training disappear and it would be possible to undertake a limited amount of casework in these areas. However, we believe the most vital needs will remain in welfare benefits advice and debt advice and the service must be structured to prioritise those.

- vi. At risk of repetition, the service must focus on these key areas and ensure it has good signposting and referral arrangements, not forgetting the Community Legal Service providers located close by but outside the borough. It must not be drawn into providing advice on all the varied issues presented by potential clients as this will compromise its effectiveness with the resource available.
- vii. The service will need to ensure its staff acquire the skills necessary to ensure access to advice for all sections of the community. This will involve work with agencies who may previously have been funded to provide a level of advice to identify and learn the skills needed to serve some communities.
- viii. Where possible, advice should be given by telephone or email and residents encouraged to pursue matters independently as long as it's within their ability.
- ix. Supported self-help services such as CASHflow should be embraced. It is

critical that advisors are clear about their role in the use of these and that it is the client who will see the matter to its conclusion - advisors must learn to deal with the frustrations of not being in control and not knowing the outcome.

- x. The service must develop excellent referral networks with all other advice providers serving the borough (whether located within its borders or not) to enable citizens to receive the advice they need as seamlessly and quickly as possible.
- xi. The service must have adequate and appropriate quality assurance systems. The borough's staff cannot be expected to audit the quality of advice. The provider or consortium must:
 - be part of a recognised advice network which audits quality (such as the Law Society or Citizens Advice). This option will not be open to all bidders and if it cannot be met, the provider must either:
 - establish a peer review relationship with an agency or firm which is a member of such a network or
 - commission a periodic advice audit including peer review of cases from a competent outside agency or firm, the results of which should be shared with the commissioner of the service.
- xii. The service must negotiate with other local service providers about their educational role. Widespread changes are expected to welfare benefits and public education on the consequences of those changes will be needed. We would see this service having the leading a role in ensuring that the main consequences for possibly large numbers of recipients and potential recipients of current and revised benefits are understood and acted on to protect claimants' income, leaving the more esoteric points of the changes to specialists.

6.3 SIZE, ROLE AND CAPACITY OF THE COMMUNITY ADVICE SERVICE

6.3.1 LEVELS OR TYPES OF ADVICE

Our normal model assumes that compared to the total number of people needing advice, many will simply need *active* signposting and *appropriate* information. This is very different from the level of signposting which, for example just gives the Job Centre Plus telephone number. It offers users a route to solving their own problems and identifies and makes appointments with providers of further advice where these are necessary. Beyond that first contact, our model, based on national research,

supposes that:

- 12.5% will need some form of intervention from an advisor to give them a specific legal interpretation of their situation - appointment, telephone appointment, detailed email response or similar. This is the LSC's "General Help" category. This is perhaps typified by situations where someone has tried to resolve a problem with a utility company or some part of the benefits service unsuccessfully and needs to know where they stand and whether and how to pursue the matter.
- A further 12.5% will need a level of casework where the advisor pursues a matter on their behalf - ranging from a single telephone call to a significant amount of correspondence. This is the situation where due to the capacity of the client or the complexity of the problem, an intervention by a third party is necessary to resolve the problem. This is the LSC's "General Help with Casework" category.
- 10% will need intensive specialist level casework, possibly including advocacy in court, before tribunals or elsewhere.

These are proportions of people not proportions of the investment needed as the cost of delivering the necessary advice increases from general to specialist levels.

During local consultation it was suggested that the proportions of clients requiring some level of intervention would be somewhat higher than in our national model above and that the outcomes of triage would be approximately:

- **Provision of assisted information - 25%** - Provision of relevant information and a low level of support in understanding for clients whose capability is such that they can deal with the matter themselves.
- **Signposting to another organisation - 25%** - where the Community Advice Service is not the appropriate source of advice - e.g. to Consumer Direct.
- **Fixing a telephone call back from a skilled advisor - 5%** where there is no need to examine documents but the experience and knowledge of an advisor is needed. This may also apply to cases of great urgency.
- **Appointment with an Advisor - 30%** face to face service and basic casework
- **Referral to outside specialist - 5%** where the service cannot provide the advice to support the complex needs of the case.
- **Referral to internal specialist - 10%** -where the specialist knowledge to deal

with a more complex matter exist within the service.

We see this as an authoritative local analysis for services delivered as they currently are but would envisage e-mail having an expanding role both for initial contact and for the delivery of advice. It also makes no provision for home visiting.

6.3.2 TYPES OF SERVICE TO BE DELIVERED BY THE COMMUNITY ADVICE SERVICE

The above proportions, however, apply to the totality of the services in an area and cannot be applied to an individual service which is part of a jigsaw of services provided by all providers.

In the model we have proposed, it is assumed that the specialist work is done elsewhere (but please see part 5.7 above concerning the impact of funding changes on the provider landscape).

We would also suggest that a great deal of the active signposting is done by other professionals and by community organisations.

The service must be accessible directly to the public and must have an effective triage service which:

- Diagnoses problems
- Identifies people who can use self help packages and finds those for them (see 6.3.3. below) and helping people who need to go straight to another agency
- Identifies people who do not, in fact, need advice
- Identifies people for who do need advice which is actually available
- Identifies the most effective ways of advising clients - telephone appointments, email, personal calls, etc.
- Identifies any barriers to the client receiving advice - language, mobility, cultural sensitivities, etc. and sets up ways of overcoming those barriers.
- Make appropriate appointments and arrangements and transmits appropriate information.

We would see the primary role for the service being in the advice and basic casework area and therefore propose a model which allocates its advice time (as opposed to

numbers for interventions) as follows:

- Triage 25%
- General Advice 27%
- Casework 43%
- Second tier advice 5%

We do not see these propositions as absolute advice to the borough but as a sound starting point from which to refine the service specification. Service providers, following the discussion reflected in part 5 of the report on the adequacy of the LSC's funding to meet specialist need consider there is more need for specialist level work to be carried out. Quite clearly, as this work involves more hours of advice time, this can only be done at the expense of the volume of people advised on simpler matters and preventative work. No specific allocation of the available resources was endorsed in the consultation process.

With a restricted budget, need cannot be fully met and hard choices have to be made about what will be provided and what, consequently, will not.

While the above figures are a starting point, bidders for the contract may have convincing arguments why they should be different.

The principle of triage being essential remains and is generally accepted. This presents a particular challenge if a new and separate provider is commissioned to deliver this service as the aim must be to offer a holistic service with as few contacts or referrals as are commensurate with delivering quality advice.

6.3.3 EXISTING OR DEDICATED SELF-HELP OR ON-LINE ADVICE

We do not recommend the development of a dedicated on-line advice service as:

- Keeping it up to date is a constant resource drain and failure to do so could potentially result in actions for negligence. Exceptions to this would relate to purely local issues.
- They tend to duplicate work which is done nationally, thus wasting resources.

Much the same arguments apply to self help packs and only in exceptional cases where nothing is available nationally and staff resources can genuinely be saved over a long period, allowing for updating, should this be considered. Active involvement in the

development and improvement of national tools should however be encouraged.

6.3.4 VOLUME AND COST

We do not feel that there is adequate, consistent benchmarking data available to offer a reliable guide price for the service the borough wishes to purchase. Costs of advice are often skewed by what the commissioner provides in kind (such as accommodation, ICT or telephony) or by assets owned outright by contractors (again an example would be buildings). They are also influenced by the use of volunteers. Volunteers are however not free. They require training, usually more intensive management support and technical supervision than salaried staff and accommodation and facilities.

We would stress that advisors are operating in a para-legal environment and the consequences of poor advice can be serious leading to homelessness, deportation (incorrect benefit advice as well as poor immigration advice can cause this), loss of amenities and household goods as well as failure to secure entitlements to income and services. In extreme cases, imprisonment can result. Some of these failures have direct impacts on the statutory services provided by the borough - homelessness and homes being unfit for children being the most obvious. Bad advice is worse than no advice since it misleads clients into making the wrong decision.

It follows that quality assurance mechanisms be put in place before volumes of work offered at a particular cost can be considered.

We do however wish to offer some modelling of what the borough may purchase. In our analysis we use the following typical mean times:

- Active signposting interventions 20 minutes
- General advice interventions 45 minutes
- Casework interventions 1 hour and 15 minutes
- Specialist work 4 hours

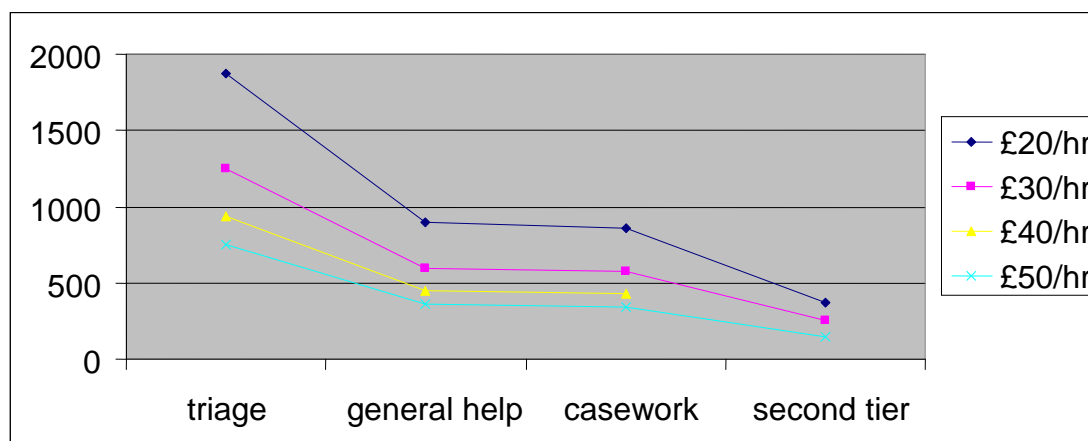
We are very aware of the enormous variation between different matters and are sure that advisors will see these as underestimates; they represent a mean not a median.

Using this formula and the proportions of advice time specified above, each £50,000 invested will deliver the following.

In considering tenders, the real cost per hour of advice, not just the hourly cost of employing and supporting an advice worker needs to be considered. It must include the cost of accommodation, services, training, library and technical journals, updating and all other costs related to running an advice service.

	% budget	events per £50k @ £25 / hour	events per £50k @ £30 / hour	events per £50k @ £35 / hour
Triage	25	1500	1250	1071
General Help	27	720	600	514
Casework	43	688	573	491
2nd tier (costed as triage)	5	300	250	214
Total Advice Events	100	3208	2673	2291

Expanding this model to different hourly rates gives commissioners an indication of the link between hourly rate and the number of interventions possible for each £50k of budget:



The Council’s budget for this service will be determined in the course of the current budget round already underway and so is not yet known, but we must state clearly that the full extent of the need for advice in the borough will not be fully met at any category from Council funding alone within any outline suggestions we have seen. Not only the volume of the service but the model of service which is possible will be shaped by the final budget.

These figures are illustrative only and we present them in the hope that they will

protect the commissioners from both false promises and poor value for money. It is entirely possible that bidders may be able to offer a greater volume for the unit sums and thus offer somewhat better value for money than the guidelines above. This should be part of the tendering process.

6.3.5 TENDERING AND COMMISSIONING MODELS

Considerable concern was expressed during consultation about the process the borough proposes.

- Some felt that the commissioning process involved local potential bidders in a great deal of work, work which they did not see as productive in delivering advice. There was a view that the changes could be delivered by new and more tightly drawn up service level agreements. How much substance is in this argument depends on the process which would be involved in introducing tighter SLA's. The two may not, in fact be radically different. Existing providers strongly expressed the view that the existing network worked and that there was no need to change it.

It is our view that if a minor reduction in budget was proposed, there is much merit in these arguments. It is our understanding, however, that the budget will be significantly reduced and should this be the case, we would be concerned that an across the board cut in budgets to all existing agencies would significantly weaken each agency's capacity to reliably deliver a quality service. In this case the balance of merit shifts towards combining the budget and offering it as a single contract for quality assurance, reliability and efficiency reasons as discussed above. Such an approach does not of course preclude a consortium of some or all of the existing providers from bidding but does ensure that the way the funding is applied is not fragmented. This approach does require:

- An appreciation of the consequences on existing providers of the withdrawal of core funding as discussed in part 5 of the report above. This applies whether or not they are the successful bidder or part of a successful consortium.
- That the new service should fully integrate with other providers to ensure that triage and assessment of the advice needs of each potential service user is carried out efficiently and effectively.

It is our view that the borough should seek tenders on the basis of the numbers of interventions it wishes to buy at the specified levels against a strict quality framework requiring experience of delivering services of these types and at those levels.

We see issues such as numbers of paid and volunteer advisors, grading and pay as being for the contractors to determine in line with the quality requirements within the specification.

6.4 SERVICE PLANNING & PARTNERSHIP

The London Borough of Barnet is commissioning this service and ultimately will control what the service does. However, they are not the only providers of advice in the borough and nor are they the only funders of advice in the borough. The service will not exist in isolation but as part of a network.

There is currently an Advice Providers' Forum and the new service should be part of that.

While the Council has engaged over the last year with partners such as NHS Barnet and other commissioners such as the Legal Services Commission, there is not a strategic forum for those commissioning advice in the borough and we feel that this is necessary on an ongoing basis to prevent duplication of precious resources within constrained budgets. We do not propose a routine talking shop but at least an annual meeting between the London Borough of Barnet, NHS Barnet, the Legal Services Commission and if possible the Big Lottery. At a time of reducing budgets this strategic approach is particularly important if savings made are not to duplicate each other and produce unexpected and undesirable consequences for all parties and Barnet's citizens. There is also lack of a strategic approach to advice services within the borough. Although the relationships between the services concerned appear to be good, a more formal relationship between Voluntary Sector Grants, Housing, Connexions, Youth services, Adult Social Services and services for older people would be desirable.

Section 7 below looks at the key points in managing the transition.

7 FROM HERE TO THERE: MANAGING THE TRANSITION

The borough has made a good start in this by declaring its intentions early. We have not sought to set out a critical path here and a number of strands of this work can be undertaken simultaneously. The guiding principle must be the greatest access to service and the least inconvenience for existing users and potential users of all advice services serving the borough through the period of transition. We would suggest the outline process is:

- i. Advertising and appointing a contractor as early as possible
- ii. Identifying the intentions of organisations that will lose funding as far as possible. This cannot be done before the tendering is complete as some or all of those organisations may bid to run the service and the identity of the successful bidder/consortium will affect this.
- iii. Detailed service design. In addition to using this report we would suggest that a panel with local expertise should be recruited from social welfare organisations, including those focussing on equality groups, and existing advice providers to inform this process.
- iv. Securing premises and agreements to use other premises for delivery of the service in appropriate localities.
- v. Recruitment of staff. The Borough should urgently seek legal advice about the possibility of issues arising under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE). The precise form of current funding and of the proposed contract will affect to whom, if anyone, TUPE protection may apply. Competent advice workers by their very nature will be aware of this. It is critical to the ability to open the service on time that this is resolved as speedily as possible.
- vi. Establishment of contacts and referral protocols with welfare agencies, welfare and health professionals and voluntary sector organisations which will continue to operate after April 2011. Arrangements for the flow of customers without undue inconvenience must be in place before April.
- vii. Liaise over arrangements for the transfer of work for any ongoing clients of any agency which is closing. Should this occur it is imperative that ongoing clients are offered means by which their cases can be completed. This will necessarily involve discussions over when and how agencies undertaking casework propose to cease opening new matters.

- viii. Publicise the changes. It would be naïve to suggest that there will not be strongly expressed concern from some quarters over the changes. There may well be press reports which reflect particular viewpoints. It is vitally important that vulnerable or disadvantaged members of the public needing advice have simple and clear information available to them and what services are available to them from where and when.

8 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

- i. Barnet requires a level of advice above the norm for an English local authority area. We have some reservations about the age of some of the available data but our projections suggest that this is about 4 percentage points above the norm. Given the trends shown by the Index of Deprivation we feel this will be an under-estimate. This figure rises to almost 37% at its highest in Burnt Oak.
- ii. There is no natural hub from which the whole borough can effectively be served. Cross borough transport is difficult and the physical location of a centre will significantly impact on who the service users are.
- iii. Barnet has a concentration of need along its western border with significant areas in the east and pockets in the north. There are some variations across age but not such as to affect service design.
- iv. Barnet has significant income deprivation. The initial brief for the design of the new service reflects this, focussing in significant measure of welfare benefits. This seems appropriate. The fact that debt has now overtaken welfare benefits in national measures of demand must however be born in mind.
- v. There are specific housing and accommodation issues, particularly relating to temporary accommodation. Housing advice is being addressed outside the scope of this report and the Community Advice Service so we do not recommend that the service focuses on Housing advice. It does however need to be aware of the debt and benefit issues typically facing residents of temporary accommodation.
- vi. The Council's performance should not be a significant factor affecting need. The Council was a 4 star performer for benefits service in its last CPA. It is reasonable to conclude that relatively little advice funding is spent pursuing incorrect Council decisions.
- vii. The Council's proposed shift from a grant regime to a contract is one which, in principle, we endorse as giving the public far more certainty about what their money will buy. What the new service is required to do needs, of course, to be closely specified to deliver the benefits of this approach. A requirement to monitor and the flexibility to vary the terms to meet changing circumstances must be incorporated.
- viii. The current pattern of provision is fairly typical with a range of advice

providers of varying sizes providing advice at varying levels. Some of these deliver relatively small amounts of advice and however excellent their work in the community is, there must be a doubt over their ability to keep up to date and accurate their advice provision over the long term. We must stress that we have not done a quality audit of individual agencies and this is a general overview based on our experience and is not specific to any of Barnet's agencies.

- ix. In this context, we endorse the Council's decision to offer the service on tender to one supplier or one consortium. We believe that, with the right provider, this offers better assurance of quality and greater flexibility in dealing with changing circumstances and staff absence, planned or otherwise.
- x. Clearly, changes to the Council's funding regime will have an impact on the agencies currently providing advice and the Council needs to monitor the impact this has on the provision of advice by those services.
- xi. Closure of or financial instability of agencies is a threat to inward investment in that other funders may withdraw or not renew funding. This probable impact on the provider landscape needs to be considered throughout this process.
- xii. A reduction in the overall spending on advice impacts right across the borough. The most disadvantaged communities potentially are hit hardest. The proposals in this report seek to minimise the impact on the most disadvantaged by more effectively focusing the available resources on those with the greatest need for advice.

8.2 SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Part 6 of the report sets out the type of service envisaged and part 7 covers the transitional process the recommendations of both are briefly summarised below

8.2.1 LOCATION(S)

- i. The service should have one main office base where all staff are located.
- ii. The service should have one main public access point.
- iii. Some out of office hours access should be available to make it accessible to the "9 - 5" workforce.
- iv. The main base and main access point should be located in the west of the borough on or near a main thoroughfare and ideally somewhere where people are likely to go when about their normal business - such as a market.
- v. A small number of locations should be chosen for weekly out-posted sessions -

from one to a maximum of three.

8.2.2 SERVICE MODEL

- i. The service must have an effective triage system.
- ii. The core of the service should be work at the Advice and initial Casework level.
- iii. Second tier advice should be offered to other professionals - social workers, careers advisors, nurses, etc. and community groups but this service would not be the primary source of high level specialist advice to other advisors.
- iv. The service should allocate a significant and ongoing resource to early intervention and prevention.
- v. The service should focus its resources on welfare benefits advice. It should give advice on debts, referring complex cases. Advice offered in other areas should be on a more limited basis. Housing advice should be referred to the separately commissioned service.
- vi. Where possible, advice should be given by telephone or email and residents encouraged to pursue matters themselves to but not beyond the limits of their personal capability.
- vii. Supported self-help services such as CASHflow should be embraced.
- viii. The service must develop excellent referral networks with all other advice providers serving the borough.
- ix. The service provider must have adequate and appropriate quality assurance systems.
- x. The service should have an educational role especially in times of rapid change of welfare law.
- xi. We envisage the service beginning on the basis of allocating its advice hours to the following levels of advice. We would expect to see this evolve with experience.
 - Triage 25%
 - General Advice 27%
 - Casework 43%
 - Second tier advice 5%Part 6 of the report sets out in more detail numbers of people who would be seen and this is not repeated here.
- xii. A high level network of agencies with a structural interest in advice should be

established to annually review the advice strategy for the borough and ensure that all funding is used to maximum effect and duplication is avoided.

8.2.3 TRANSITION

Section 7 sets out the process as we see it, essential points are:

- i. The new supplier should be in place as soon as possible.
- ii. Intentions of agencies losing their advice funding should be ascertained to enable a realistic map of the services which will continue to be in place and any gaps consequent on the changes in funding to be constructed.
- iii. Arrangements need to be made for ongoing casework from any agency planning to close or cease its advice function.
- iv. Any TUPE responsibility must be identified and addressed immediately in order not to delay recruitment to the new service.
- v. Referral mechanisms must be put in place across the network of services.
- vi. Accurate information of changes and the new service must be sent out to the public and other professionals at the earliest opportunity.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

The final selection of performance indicators and the actual performance targets will depend on both the budget and the competitive tendering process but we have set out below a range of performance indicators we believe would be effective.

- number of people “seen” (i.e. reaching triage) based on final budget and unit costs.
- percentage of enquiries dealt with by service (as opposed to referred on) - this could be just the percentage of benefit enquiries if the final service is heavily weighted in this direction.
- Production of information on numbers of people for whom it is not possible to find a source of advice to refer them to.
- percentage of total cases opened (as opposed to enquiries received) which are welfare benefits.
- benefit cash gained (£).
- volume of debt handled (£).
- percentage of positive outcomes from matters opened as cases. We would define this as client’s position stabilised or improved - examples being benefits secured, homelessness averted, utility disconnection averted, debts written off or repayments made affordable.
- production of a breakdown of ethnicity of clients to be matched with borough’s ethnic base. We would suggest this is done for a large proportion of clients for whom a case is opened - up to 100% but for less enquirers (see below.)
- production of Postcode data for match to target areas. We would suggest this is done for a large proportion of clients for whom a case is opened - up to 100% but for less enquirers (see below).
- production of age and gender data match to borough age profiles. We would suggest this is done for a large proportion of clients for whom a case is opened - up to 100% but for less enquirers (see below).
- monitor at least 7.5% of all customers (i.e. reaching triage) for equality analysis purposes - we would suggest one week a quarter ideally or a four week block in a the year.
- complete user satisfaction Surveys (including for some clients referred on).

- published an agreed number of Benefit Briefings/updates.
- deliver a number of planned early intervention events through targeted outreach.
- assist a specified number of people through the above.
- percentage of advertised advice sessions delivered.
- maintenance of a complaints log and evidence of action to resolve complaints and improve practice.
- completion of peer review exercise with agreed partner.
- deliver quarterly reports of above data.

A small number of the targets above are initially set as simply the production of information. We would see this being analysed by the borough in conjunction with the contractor and specific improvement targets being set for future years - for instance to increase the service use by a particular part of the population.

We could propose a whole raft of outcome measures but it may be better to look at the successful contractor's existing measures and decide if they are fit for purpose rather than to impose an alien, time consuming (& possibly duplicate) system. Some of this information may also enable performance targets to be set. If a consortium bidder is awarded the contract, they should produce a single set of data for the borough.

Satisfaction survey could include some "impact" questions to identify enhanced life opportunities / well being / equality impact. If this is done, collecting them would be the PI.

APPENDIX 2: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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APPENDIX 3: ANARAK

In 1996, Michael Bell Associates pioneered the use of a computer-generated advice needs assessment model. This was based on a series of socio-economic factors that was considered would be likely to lead to increased (or decreased) levels of need for advice.

The model requires a number of data inputs, such as the number of residents in an area, the number of households, and a range of socio demographic statistics, which serve as indicators. The following five areas are thought to be appropriate indicators of deprivation for advice needs modelling. These are:

1. Income deprivation
2. Work deprivation
3. Health deprivation
4. Housing deprivation
5. Education, skills and training deprivation

In addition, included are both ethnic origin and age as indicators of advice need because the elderly populations tend to have restricted mobility, which has implications for home visits for example, and large BME communities often have higher levels of need for advice and potential cost implications for interpretation and translation facility implications.

Advice needs and consequent resource requirements are subject to a Special Needs Multiplier (SNM) based on these indicators, which once applied to an area, produces an indication as to how much above or below a national mean need for advice.

This latter figure for the national level of need for advice is based upon research conducted by the National Consumer Council in 1992, which indicated that 16.5% of the population used, or would have used if they had known about it or it had been accessible, some form of legal advice service. These calculations were reviewed against the calculations for advice need in Hazel Genn's report Paths to Justice in

1999 against more recent LSRC reports.

ANARAK findings are calculations that allow for an *estimate* of likely-predicted advice need in a given area and an indication of the level of resources required to meet this need. They are used here to predict the proportions of spending which is likely to be needed in different legal topics, at different levels of advice at Ward level across the Borough.

Critically ANARAK is based on a projection of need not on demand which may present a very different picture. It is often easier for less deprived communities to demand services when they may not be the communities most in need. We stress that ANARAK, powerful though it is, is one tool to be used in the assessment and should not be used alone as it cannot possibly factor in all the local issues which may affect the patterns of need.

ANARAK Findings

Overall we found that residents of Barnet are 4.13 percentage points more likely to need advice than average residents. This rises to 37.29 percentage points more likely in Burnt Oak, falling to 16.13 percentage points less likely in Brunswick Park. Charts of these findings are included in the report. The detailed findings by ward are below. Source data comes from HMRC 2008 figures, ONS 2008 mid-year estimates, GLA population projections, July 2010 labour force survey, London Borough of Barnet population projections and 2001 Census data.

Ward	Income Deprivation	Work Deprivation	Health Deprivation	Housing Deprivation	Education, Skills and Training Deprivation	Other Demographic Profile Indicators of Need	Special Needs Multiplier	Population
Burnt Oak	2.71	0.15	-1.07	19.78	-2.67	18.39	37.29%	16,687
Colindale	1.61	0.35	-2.24	20.83	-1.12	1.91	21.34%	17,652
West Hendon	-1.97	-0.4	-2.74	8.97	-0.41	13.36	16.82%	15,495
Edgware	0.39	-0.6	-3.68	-2.57	-0.24	21.35	14.66%	16,273
Childs Hill	2.56	-0.35	-3.38	14.03	1.58	-2.25	12.20%	19,326
Golders Green	-3.86	-0.55	-3.75	8.59	1.29	11.46	13.17%	17,495
Woodhouse	0.61	-0.5	-1.76	2.08	-0.28	9.37	9.52%	16,653
East Finchley	2.67	-0.55	-2.36	12.23	0.23	-2.71	9.50%	15,543
Hendon	0.60	-0.7	-3.92	5.35	1.46	3.19	5.98%	16,676
Underhill	3.81	-0.3	-1.86	3.39	-2.31	-0.65	2.08%	16,824
Mill Hill	1.60	-0.8	-4.12	-5.27	0.08	10.08	1.57%	18,599
Hale	2.28	-0.65	-2.72	-5.69	-0.87	7.81	0.17%	16,804
West Finchley	-0.30	-0.8	-2.88	5.35	1.11	-2.32	0.17%	15,599
Garden Suburb	2.81	-1.3	-5.68	-3.34	2.61	4.44	-0.48%	15,782
Finchley Church End	-0.44	-0.65	-4.47	-0.91	1.89	3.73	-0.85%	15,423
Coppetts	1.85	-0.4	-2.85	1.21	-0.43	-1.58	-2.20%	15,642
Totteridge	-2.40	-1.2	-5.46	-2.49	0.59	3.19	-7.76%	15,423
East Barnet	0.09	-0.45	-4.61	-6.46	-1.32	4.76	-7.99%	16,517
High Barnet	1.05	-0.95	-3.43	-9.64	0.15	1.73	11.10%	15,388
Oakleigh	2.64	-0.8	-3.00	-10.37	-0.15	0.50	11.18%	15,857
Brunswick Park	0.16	-0.65	-3.32	-12.27	-1.11	1.06	16.13%	16,145