**Proposal document**

**Advice Service Provision in the Rochford District:**

**Principles and features for the future**

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**Advice Service Provision in Rochford District:**

**Principles and features for the future**

# 1 Introduction

## This document considers the need for advice services in the Rochford District and how these services may be delivered most effectively in the medium term.

## This work directly supports corporate themes of:

## Place

* Homes
* Economic Growth

It also helps to support our core values of:

* Rising to the challenge
* Delivering in unity
* Committed to the community

##  The document is in four parts:

### Background information, which defines what we mean by advice, describes the current position in the District, and the services that are currently available.

### A needs analysis, which gathers information from a number of sources (national and local) to help identify the advice needs in the District. Sources quoted are referenced throughout the document.

### Outcomes from our consultation with the community and stakeholders

### The features and principles which will guide the specification for future advice services in the District that draws on the evidence of the needs analysis and consultation responses.

# Background information

## 2.1 We recognise that there are lots of statutory, private and voluntary sector agencies that provide a range of types of information and advice alongside other services, some free of charge and others for a fee. For the purpose of this document we are defining advice services as:

*The provision of free, confidential and independent information, advice and representation to enable local people to exercise their rights and responsibilities in relation to legal and financial matters in the following areas of social welfare law: welfare benefits, debt, housing, employment, discrimination and immigration.*

##

##  These advice services may be delivered in person, by telephone or electronic communication such as email or the provision of self help materials.

## We also recognise that in order to exercise their rights and responsibilities some people have advocacy needs. These are defined for the purposes of this document as:

*Support and intervention required from another individual in order to*

*articulate needs or understand processes and procedures in relation to a benefits, debt, housing, immigration, discrimination or employment issue*

## 2.3 Advice Services are important for individuals and for the Council. Unexpected events, such as illness, redundancy, low income, can place people in situations where they need advice. Without access to timely information, advice and guidance

## and, in some cases, more involved casework, many people are unable to manage their situation successfully.

## If appropriate and timely advice is not available issues can escalate, which may lead to more serious problems such as homelessness, ill-health, particularly mental ill health, and crime. This creates problems and pressures, which impact on Council and other public services. The Advice Services Alliance argues in The Case for Advice (2010) that advice has a positive impact on at least four areas of life:

## Health and well-being

* Creating opportunity
* Promoting fairness and overcoming disadvantage
* Improving public services and cutting waste
	1. Existing Service Provision Local

**Main provision**

 In the Rochford District the main provider of a local advice service is the Rochford & Rayleigh Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). This service is delivered from premises in Back Lane, Rochford and in the Civic Suite, Rayleigh, supplied free of charge by the Council.

 The Rochford & Rayleigh CAB are currently open to the public for 20 hours per week:

**Rochford Office**
Tuesday 10am - 2pm
Thursday 10am - 2pm

**Rayleigh Office**
Monday 10am - 2pm
Thursday 10am - 2pm
Friday 10am - 2pm

Outreach sessions have also recently started in Hockley, operating for two hours at least monthly.

 **Other organisations offering advice in the District include:** Age UK, Basildon Women’s Aid, DIAL, Community Church Rochford, Family Mosaic.

* 1. Restricted funding for the Advice 360 project was secured for specialist debt, employment, housing and benefits advice but this falls outside of the core service. This funding was secured through the Big Lottery Advice Services Transition Fund and ends on 31 August 2015. If sufficient funding is not available from other sources, the service will need to be run down prior to this date.
	2. The range of issues dealt with by the Rochford & Rayleigh CAB is set out in the table below and shows that the overwhelming majority of casework concerns issues relating to welfare benefits and to debt.

The data suggests that advice services can play a key role in tackling poverty and increasing social justice by assisting local people on a low income to claim their full benefit entitlements and manage their debts. Analysis of the data published by the Rochford and Rayleigh CAB for 2013/14 shows that the two main sources of advice issues are related to benefits and debt:

 **Chart 1:** Advice issueshandled by Rochford & Rayleigh CAB, 2013/14

##

## 2.6 The Council’s current (2015/16) direct investment in the voluntary advice sector is £67,000, which is paid as an annual grant to the Rochford & Rayleigh CAB. The Council provides help-in-kind to the Rochford & Rayleigh CAB in the form of use of accommodation at the Civic Suite in Rayleigh and in Back Lane, Rochford. 12 parking spaces are also provided.

## 2.7 The Council also currently funds DIAL and Basildon Women’s Aid through its annual small grants scheme.

## 2.8 To be effective in tackling poverty and increasing social justice, future advice service delivery in the District will have to address the two aims of:

## being accessible to residents with advice needs.

## targeting the most intensive advice support at those people with the most complex problems who are the least able to resolve the issue themselves.

## Future investment in advice services should be based on the above two aims.

**3 Needs analysis**

1. The purpose of this analysis is to consider the incidence in the local population of people in need of advice and to identify as far as possible where these people are located.

To do this we have looked at:

* Monitoring data published by Advice Services
* Population statistics
* Index of multiple deprivation
* Published data relating to health
* Census data
* Evidence relating to people on a low income including available data relating to means tested benefits
* Access considerations

**Low income** has been used as our measure to identify those people most likely to be in need of the kind of advice that fulfils the objective of tackling poverty and social justice.

* 1. **Monitoring data received from Advice Services**

According to the latest annual report (2013/14) from the Rochford and Rayleigh CAB, they had 9,963 interactions (face to face, by telephone, email etc.), with 2,568 clients to advise on 7,101 problems.

Under the terms of its current Service Level Agreement, the Rochford and Rayleigh CAB provides the following statistical information on a quarterly basis:

* Number of clients starting new enquires
* Number of enquiries categorised for each core service
* A breakdown of the age range of clients (provided on an annual basis)
* Number of hours provided by paid staff
* Number of hours provided by volunteers
* Results of customer satisfaction surveys
* Potential benefit identified for clients
* Council Tax debts
* Council Tax and Housing benefit overpayments
* Universal Credit enquires
* Summary of CAB participation in RDC programmes and initiatives
* Number of actual homelessness and reasons
* Threatened homelessness and reasons
* Food parcel enquiries
* Access to and provision of Accommodation
* Environmental and neighbour issues
	1. **District population**

The 2011 Census recorded a population of 83,287. Below is a breakdown of population by ward. Census data shows that Rochford Ward has the greatest population, followed by Hullbridge and Hockley Central. Barling and Sutton has the fewest residents.

| **Ward**  | **Population (number) – All Persons (number)** |
| --- | --- |
| Ashingdon and Canewdon | 4514 |
| Barling and Sutton | 1876 |
| Downhall and Rawreth | 4843 |
| Foulness and Great Wakering | 5738 |
| Grange | 3739 |
| Hawkwell North | 4536 |
| Hawkwell South | 4249 |
| Hawkwell West | 4134 |
| Hockley Central | 6526 |
| Hockley North | 2120 |
| Hockley West | 2096 |
| Hullbridge | 6527 |
| Lodge | 4088 |
| Rayleigh Central | 4255 |
| Rochford (Ward) | 7695 |
| Sweyne Park | 4415 |
| Trinity  | 3697 |
| Wheatley | 4191 |
| Whitehouse | 4048 |

**Source:** Office for National Statistics (ONS) Census 2011.

In terms of population growth, it is anticipated that the population of the District will grow from about 84,500 in 2014 to just under 87,000 in 2020.

| **Year** | **Population**  |
| --- | --- |
| 2014 | 84,455 |
| 2015 | 84,815 |
| 2016 | 85,196 |
| 2017 | 85,586 |
| 2018 | 86,021 |
| 2019 | 86,464 |
| 2020 | 86,942 |

**Source:** [Interim 2012-based subnational population projections with components of change (births, deaths and migration) for regions and local authorities in England)](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/snpp/sub-national-population-projections/Interim-2011-based/rft-table-5.xls)

* 1. **Index of Multiple Deprivation**

## The map shows differences in deprivation levels in this area based on national quintiles (fifths) of the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 by Lower Super Output Area. The darkest coloured areas are some of the most deprived areas in England. Lines on the map represent electoral Wards. The District is ranked 299 out of 326 authorities in England for deprivation (1 is the most deprived)[[1]](#footnote-1). Within the District itself, the wards of Ashingdon, Canewdon and Rochford are the most deprived.

****

* 1. **Evidence relating to people on a low income**

**Working age residents claiming key benefits (May 2014)**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Rochford(numbers)** | **Rochford(%)** | **East(%)** | **Great Britain(%)** |
| Total claimants | 3,960 | 7.8 | 10.4 | 12.9 |
| **By statistical group** |
| Job seekers | 630 | 1.2 | 1.8 | 2.4 |
| ESA and incapacity benefits | 1,730 | 3.4 | 4.8 | 6.2 |
| Lone parents | 350 | 0.7 | 1.0 | 1.2 |
| Carers | 530 | 1.0 | 1.2 | 1.4 |
| Others on income related benefits | 110 | 0.2 | 0.3 | 0.3 |
| Disabled | 520 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.2 |
| Bereaved | 100 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 0.2 |
| Key out-of-work benefits† | 2,820 | 5.5 | 8.0 | 10.2 |

Source: DWP benefit claimants - working age client group

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| † | Key out-of-work benefits includes the groups: job seekers, ESA and incapacity benefits, lone parents and others on income related benefits.  |
| Note:  | % is a proportion of resident population of area aged 16-64 |

A recent survey looking at the potential impact of Universal Credit implementation conducted by the Revenues and Benefits team at Rochford Council found that 56% of respondents thought they would have to borrow money should there be changes to the amount of benefits that they receive.

The table below shows the number of residents in receipt of Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit, split between working age and pensioners.



* 1. **Ethnicity (BME)**

The table below shows the ethnic make up of the District. The overwhelming majority of residents are White British, almost 96%.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Rochford District Residents** | **83,287** |
| White; English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British | 79,628 |
| White; Irish | 468 |
| White; Gypsy or Irish Traveller | 49 |
| White; Other White | 792 |
| Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups; White and Black Caribbean | 296 |
| Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups; White and Black African | 127 |
| Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups; White and Asian | 304 |
| Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups; Other Mixed | 178 |
| Asian/Asian British; Indian | 262 |
| Asian/Asian British; Pakistani | 42 |
| Asian/Asian British; Bangladeshi | 81 |
| Asian/Asian British; Chinese | 228 |
| Asian/Asian British; Other Asian | 268 |
| Black/African/Caribbean/Black British; African | 235 |
| Black/African/Caribbean/Black British; Caribbean | 95 |
| Black/African/Caribbean/Black British; Other Black | 103 |
| Other Ethnic Group; Arab | 40 |
| Other Ethnic Group; Any Other Ethnic Group | 91 |

 **Source:** Office for National Statistics (ONS) Census 2011.

* 1. **Older people**

The table below shows the number of older people residing in each ward of the District. Hullbridge Ward has the highest number of older people in the District.

| **Ward** | **50-54** | **55-59** | **60-64** | **65-69** | **70-74** | **75-79** | **80-84** | **85+** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Ashingdon and Canewdon | 343 | 312 | 360 | 300 | 181 | 158 | 128 | 111 |
| Barling and Sutton | 155 | 135 | 139 | 111 | 70 | 60 | 46 | 40 |
| Downhall and Rawreth | 376 | 311 | 337 | 238 | 187 | 130 | 106 | 80 |
| Foulness and Great Wakering | 437 | 408 | 463 | 305 | 226 | 197 | 138 | 118 |
| Grange | 218 | 177 | 192 | 174 | 148 | 148 | 88 | 81 |
| Hawkwell North | 372 | 337 | 335 | 257 | 188 | 141 | 80 | 98 |
| Hawkwell South | 288 | 244 | 270 | 246 | 201 | 234 | 147 | 114 |
| Hawkwell West | 329 | 268 | 289 | 282 | 213 | 162 | 100 | 89 |
| Hockley Central | 460 | 396 | 433 | 429 | 333 | 366 | 279 | 219 |
| Hockley North | 163 | 156 | 171 | 132 | 98 | 79 | 52 | 42 |
| Hockley West | 149 | 158 | 175 | 146 | 96 | 79 | 47 | 26 |
| Hullbridge | 444 | 466 | 672 | 588 | 481 | 309 | 186 | 177 |
| Lodge | 299 | 270 | 345 | 266 | 212 | 180 | 104 | 70 |
| Rayleigh Central | 247 | 286 | 334 | 251 | 231 | 195 | 129 | 125 |
| Rochford | 470 | 441 | 428 | 364 | 303 | 255 | 203 | 257 |
| Sweyne Park | 279 | 231 | 255 | 188 | 135 | 91 | 80 | 66 |
| Trinity | 231 | 222 | 281 | 236 | 237 | 244 | 122 | 103 |
| Wheatley | 270 | 245 | 275 | 250 | 181 | 184 | 172 | 156 |
| Whitehouse | 249 | 222 | 307 | 236 | 194 | 213 | 203 | 168 |

 **Source:** Office for National Statistics (ONS) Census 2011.

The Council’s Ageing Population Strategy includes commitment to working with CAB, the organisation currently funded by the Council, to provide advice. This commitment to support advice provision to older people will continue post April 2016.

1,260 people aged over 65 in Rochford are thought to have dementia

This figure is estimated to rise to 2,270 by 2030.



Source: Essex JSNA, Rochford District Profile, <http://www.essexinsight.org.uk/Resource.aspx?GroupID=2&ResourceID=382>

* 1. **General Health and Disability**

The Census 2011 included a question asking people to rate their general health as either ‘Good’, ‘Moderate’, ‘Bad’, or ‘Very Bad’. The table below shows that Rochford Ward has the highest percentage of people that describe their health as ‘Bad’ or ‘Very Bad’. Hockley West has the fewest.

| **Ward** | **% of Total Population Bad/Very Bad Health** |
| --- | --- |
| Ashingdon and Canewdon | 3.9 |
| Barling and Sutton | 3.8 |
| Downhall and Rawreth | 2.9 |
| Foulness and Great Wakering | 4.8 |
| Grange | 3.5 |
| Hawkwell North | 3.6 |
| Hawkwell South | 5.0 |
| Hawkwell West | 3.7 |
| Hockley Central | 4.4 |
| Hockley North | 3.6 |
| Hockley West | 2.6 |
| Hullbridge | 5.2 |
| Lodge | 3.6 |
| Rayleigh Central | 4.5 |
| Rochford (Ward) | 6.0 |
| Sweyne Park | 3.6 |
| Trinity | 5.1 |
| Wheatley | 4.3 |
| Whitehouse | 4.6 |

**Source:** Office for National Statistics (ONS) Census 2011.

The table below shows the number of residents claiming Disability Living Allowance by Ward (May 2014). Rochford Ward has the highest number, Hockley West has the fewest.



**Source:** Nomis web <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>

Rochford performs well across a range of health and wellbeing indicators, meaning that the vast majority of our residents live healthy, active and prosperous lives. Residents tend to make positive lifestyles choices, for example, levels of smoking and substance misuse are in line with the national averages. However, Rochford does have some health and wellbeing problems affecting our residents. The Public Health England Health Profile 2014 and most recent Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for both areas highlight the following issues as being priorities:

* Obesity and adult physical activity
* Dementia and vulnerable older people
* Long term chronic conditions e.g. diabetes
* Support to young people who are NEET

These issues are not only detrimental to the health and wellbeing of residents and their families but can impact the whole community.

# Tenure

The table below shows the tenure of properties within the District. Hockley West has the highest percentage of owned properties (either outright or mortgaged). Rochford Ward has the highest number of social rented properties. Hawkwell South has the highest percentage of private rented properties.

| **Ward** | **% Owned (including with mortgage)** | **% Social rented** | **% Private rented** | **% Other** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Ashingdon and Canewdon | 82.5 | 7.1 | 8.4 | 2.0 |
| Barling and Sutton | 81.5 | 5.5 | 11.8 | 1.1 |
| Downhall and Rawreth | 90.1 | 3.4 | 5.7 | 0.8 |
| Foulness and Great Wakering | 73.2 | 12.6 | 10.5 | 1.5 |
| Grange | 33.9 | 1.4 | 4.5 | 0.6 |
| Hawkwell North | 89.5 | 3.2 | 6.2 | 1.1 |
| Hawkwell South | 79.5 | 3.7 | 15.8 | 1.0 |
| Hawkwell West | 93.2 | 1.5 | 4.7 | 0.6 |
| Hockley Central | 85.1 | 5.5 | 8.5 | 0.9 |
| Hockley North | 89.2 | 5.6 | 4.8 | 0.4 |
| Hockley West | 95.3 | 0.4 | 3.6 | 0.6 |
| Hullbridge | 90.7 | 2.7 | 5.6 | 0.9 |
| Lodge | 91.4 | 2.3 | 5.5 | 0.8 |
| Rayleigh Central | 86.4 | 8.1 | 4.9 | 0.6 |
| Rochford | 60.4 | 24.5 | 13.7 | 1.4 |
| Sweyne Park | 76.8 | 13.7 | 8.6 | 0.9 |
| Trinity | 92.7 | 2.7 | 4.2 | 0.4 |
| Wheatley | 80.5 | 8.3 | 10.3 | 0.9 |
| Whitehouse | 80.5 | 9.3 | 8.9 | 1.4 |

**Source:** Office for National Statistics (ONS) Census 2011.

* 1. **Employment**

This table shows how the JSA claimants per Rochford District Ward compare with each other. Rochford Ward has the highest percentage of JSA claimants.

| **Ward** | **JSA Claimants** | **% Working Age Population** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Rochford District** | **522** | **1.0** |
| Ashingdon and Canewdon | 28 | 1.0 |
| Barling and Sutton | 12 | 1.0 |
| Downhall and Rawreth | 29 | 0.9 |
| Foulness and Great Wakering | 34 | 0.9 |
| Grange | 27 | 1.2 |
| Hawkwell North | 23 | 0.8 |
| Hawkwell South | 39 | 1.5 |
| Hawkwell West | 23 | 0.9 |
| Hockley Central | 30 | 0.8 |
| Hockley North | 7 | 0.5 |
| Hockley West | 6 | 0.5 |
| Hullbridge | 39 | 1.0 |
| Lodge | 20 | 0.8 |
| Rayleigh Central | 28 | 1.1 |
| Rochford | 83 | 1.7 |
| Sweyne Park | 38 | 1.3 |
| Trinity | 14 | 0.7 |
| Wheatley | 32 | 1.3 |
| Whitehouse | 10 | 0.4 |

**Source:** Nomis Web Feb 2015.

The Census 2011 recorded that Rochford Ward had the highest percentage of unemployed people. Hockley West had the fewest.

| **Ward**  | **% Population Aged 16-74** |
| --- | --- |
| Ashingdon and Canewdon | 3.1 |
| Barling and Sutton | 2.9 |
| Downhall and Rawreth | 2.2 |
| Foulness and Great Wakering | 3.7 |
| Grange | 3.4 |
| Hawkwell North | 2.4 |
| Hawkwell South | 3.6 |
| Hawkwell West | 2.7 |
| Hockley Central | 2.7 |
| Hockley North | 2.7 |
| Hockley West | 1.9 |
| Hullbridge | 3.0 |
| Lodge | 2.4 |
| Rayleigh Central | 2.8 |
| Rochford (ward) | 4.0 |
| Sweyne Park | 3.7 |
| Trinity  | 2.3 |
| Wheatley | 3.5 |
| Whitehouse | 2.9 |

**Source:** Office for National Statistics (ONS) Census 2011.

**Rochford Council Homelessness Statistics 2013/14**

Homeless decision full duty = 69

Total homeless applications (including those under duty) = 133

Homeless Prevention Enquiries = 13

Housing advice enquiry’s = 658

* 1. **Families and children**

The percentage of children living in low income households in the District is 11.4% - 16.7% is the East of England average.[[2]](#footnote-2)

8% of primary school children and 7% of secondary school children receive Free School Meals. The Essex highest figure is in Tendring, 21% primary and 16% secondary.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The table below shows Rochford (ward) and Foulness and Great Wakering have the highest number of lone parent households with dependent children. Hockley West has the fewest.

| **Ward** | **Number of households containing a lone parent with dependent children**  |
| --- | --- |
| Ashingdon and Canewdon | 75 |
| Barling and Sutton | 28 |
| Downhall and Rawreth | 60 |
| Foulness and Great Wakering | 138 |
| Grange | 59 |
| Hawkwell North | 65 |
| Hawkwell South | 80 |
| Hawkwell West | 65 |
| Hockley Central | 99 |
| Hockley North | 28 |
| Hockley West | 24 |
| Hullbridge | 90 |
| Lodge | 53 |
| Rayleigh Central | 59 |
| Rochford (Ward) | 317 |
| Sweyne Park | 106 |
| Trinity | 46 |
| Wheatley | 78 |
| Whitehouse | 70 |

**Source:** Office for National Statistics (ONS) Census 2011.

* 1. **Fuel poverty by lower super output area**

A household is said to be in fuel poverty if it needs to spend more than 10% of its income on fuel to maintain a satisfactory heating regime. Three of Rochford’s 53 LSOAs are in the 10% most at risk of experiencing fuel poverty in Essex; these are the wards of Foulness and Great Wakering, Ashingdon and Canewdon and Barling and Sutton.



* 1. **Mental health**

In the Castle Point & Rochford Clinical Commissioning Group area 3.4% of people completing the GP patient survey report a long term mental health problem. The England average is 4.5%.[[4]](#footnote-4)

The estimated incidence of psychosis per 100,000 people aged 16-64 is 15.9 in the District, with 19.9 being the East of England score.[[5]](#footnote-5)

One of the main mental health charities in the area (South East & Central Essex Mind) dealt with the following number of people in the Rochford District post code areas from January 2014 to January 2015.

SS3 38

SS4 19

SS5 24

SS6 7

**Total 88**

**4. Consultation – Our approach**

A public consultation was open between mid January and early April which sought to gain an insight into how local residents access local advice services and their experiences of these services. The survey was made accessible in both online (facilitated by Essex CC) and hard copy. Relevant local community organisations and businesses were contacted to ensure their service users / customers were able to participate. The Council’s Have Your Say Group were also consulted. A partner / stakeholder consultation was also opened at the same time.

 The key findings from the consultation are provided in the next section.

 A stakeholder event was also held in early April to allow interested organisation to learn more about the process and to feed in any further comments. The event was attended by 7 local organisations.

**4.1 Key outcomes of consultation**

 **Public consultation** – total number of responses received **247.**

Multiple responses were received from every ward. The wards with the highest return were Rochford, Rayleigh Central and Ashingdon and Canewdon.

 Top 5 issues that residents sought advice on in the last 12 months were:

 1. Welfare benefits

 2. Debt advice and budgeting

 3. Employment

 4. Family and personal matters

 5. Housing and homelessness

Of those who recently sought advice most did this face to face 77.7%, 11.8% used the internet, 4.2% used the telephone and 1.4% used email. 4.9% did not respond.

Most of the respondents’ preference for seeking advice is through face to face, followed by telephone, internet then email

The majority of respondents felt that the advice they had received over the last few months had been to an excellent or very good standard. Similarly the majority of respondents felt access to advice services has been very easy or easy.

When asked what aspects should be provided in a future advice service there was a clear preference for the following:

* Walk in service open during working week (137 responses)
* A website that is easy to use with information that is easy to find (113 responses)
* Telephone access during working week (101 responses)
* An advice service located in Rayleigh (95 responses)
* An advice service located in Rochford (90 responses)
* An Appointment System (73 responses)

An preference for having an outreach service was given for the following locations: Ashingdon, Hullbridge, Canewdon.

Respondents preferred method for seeking future advice was in person followed by the internet, then telephone and email.

In the general comments section there was recognition of the value of the current advice service being provided. Comments were also made on:

* The need for future providers to be trustworthy and have a good reputation
* The importance of offering a variety of methods for seeking advice in an area as diverse as the Rochford District
* Face to face should always be offered, particularly for complicated problems
* The nature of the advice being sought should dictate what method of advice is pursued
* Advice services need to be promoted better.

**Stakeholder consultation** – total number of responses received **6.** A summary of responses is provided below.

|  | Family Mosaic | SE Essex Advocacy for Older People | Essex Libraries | DIAL | Community Church Rochford |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Q1. What advice services should be provided? e.g. Council Tax, general debt advice and budgeting welfare benefits, employment, housing and homelessness, family and personal matters, taxes, disability, immigration and nationality, health, education, discrimination  | Agree with examples provided. cut in legal aid there is a need for specialised legal support, similar to what the Advice 360 project offers. | Offer to extend their service to Rochford District.Service includes: debt and finance, housing, residential care, welfare benefits, appeals service. | Agree with examples provided. Should be available to all residents. | Agree with examples provided. Possibly information on local social activities. | Agree with examples provided. |
| Q2. Where should services be offered | Rayleigh and Rochford | A focus should be on the over 60 year olds. | Use of libraries, council offices and community centres should be considered.  | Throughout the District. Outreach in rural areas. In towns the service needs to be delivered from fully accessible locations. Utilising libraries where possible | In each town in District using multiple outlets in each town. |
| Q3. How should services be provided? | Face to face / webchat  | One to one, phone and email, form filling service. | Face to face, phone, website, email, post, webchat  | Face to face, phone, website, email, post webchat, text for hearing impaired and language line for non-English speakers.  | Face to face, phone, website, email, post webchat. |
| Q4. When should services be provided? | By appointment and drop in. Weekend opening would be good. | Implications of advice that should be provided under the Care Act needs consideration | Email, webchat and website 24/7. Face to face and phone every day during working hours. If library used to deliver, this service could be offered on Saturday’s too. | Monday – Friday. Perhaps one evening per week and some Saturday mornings. | As much flexibility as possible should be included. Appointment should be available where extended coverage cannot be provided. |
| Q5 Any other comments | No | Further description of service offered  | No | Needs to be a multi-agency approach to achieve best value and best outcomes. | This organisation provides advice services with limited take up. Would welcome an integrated approach. |

Rochford and Rayleigh CAB gave a comprehensive response to the survey. See below:

**Q1.** Rochford & Rayleigh Citizens Advice Bureau deals with issues on all the areas stated above demonstrating the need for the full range of areas to be covered. Problems are interrelated - eg relationship breakdown is seldom the sole problem. Relationship breakdown causes issues relating to a client's housing, employment, debt, benefits etc. A holistic service deals with all the issues, not just the presenting issue in isolation. Dealing with the one issue would not solve the underlying problems. In addition, the provision of advice on discrimination issues is vital. Through research undertaken by Citizens Advice, (Stand up for Equality 2012-15) there is a need to develop advice services in areas where equality and greatest need intersect, where people's rights are most at threat and where they have least access and face barriers to advice.

1st April 2013 - 31st March 2014 we helped 2568 clients with 7101 issues. The issues generated 9963 contacts i.e. work we have done on behalf of our clients. The top five subject areas we dealt with during this period were benefits and tax credits, debt, employment, housing and relationship and family issues. These make up 83% of our enquiries. Being able to identlfy and help with other issues that have a bearing on the main subject areas is essential and need to be tackled in a co-ordinated way. We are finding that problems are becoming more complex as different pressures come to bear, which means that an integrated, holistic approach to advice is important. The need for full advice appointments lasting approx 1 hour after an initial assessment is increasing. Client satisfaction is continually monitored to ensure we meet the needs of clients.

Access to County wide initiatives are available locally through working in partnership with other bureaux in Essex eg Home visits by bureau volunteers/staff for completion of complex benefit forms through Essex County Council Financial Assessors and Benefit Advisers, collection points at both offices for Essential Living Fund Allpay cards. Access to national initiatives such as Pension Wise guidance is also important for the benefit of residents.

This will become ever more important as welfare reforms continue plus the possibility of further interest rate increases put pressure on already stretched household budgets.

First hand information of how policies and practices affect client's lives is used as evidence (anonymously) to campaign for change. Hence one person's contact with the bureau can affect many more people's lives for good. Research into issues affecting the local community contributes to the local authority's plans. This primary evidence enables a quick response to local advice needs.

Advice given must be quality assured so residents can be confident in the advice they receive.

**Q2.** Existing clients who indicated their address in the first six months of 2014-15 were from the following areas:

Rayleigh 40% (highest population in the District)

Hawkwell 15%

Hockley 8%

Hullbridge 7%

Rochford 23% (areas of deprivation)

Great Wakering 5%

The geography of the area is such that the two main centres in the District - Rochford and Rayleigh have good or reasonable transport links. The Local Authority have their offices in these two locations so having access to face to face advice in the same areas supports the local authority. The primary area of deprivation in the district is in Rochford. Approx 1 in 8 households from this ward used the services of the bureau in 2013/14.

Outreaches have been and are being trialled as part of a larger project. From the evidence gathered to date, residents are willing to travel to the main centres in Rochford and Rayleigh to access face to face advice or use other means to access advice such as telephone or the internet. Our biannual client satisfaction surveys have regularly demonstrated such willingness.

**Q3.** Citizens Advice carried out research in Autumn 2014 into what people wanted from our advice service. This was research carried out amongst those who had accessed the service and those who had not used the bureau before. 42% said they wanted to be able to contact the bureau easily by phone, 20% wanted a high street location within easy travel of home or work, 14% being able to contact the organisation by email and 11% wanted the person spoken to to be based in the local area. This indicates that having a variety of ways to access advice is important. Not one channel is appropriate to everyone or for every situation but having the range enables more people to access advice in a way that suits them eg the surgance in use of social media is attractive to younger people. Traditionally the percentage of younger people using our service is low. In 2013/14 approx 23% of our clients were under 34. The 35 - 49 age group made up 30%. Increased use of technology is important: resources have been secured (2015/16) to deliver web chat. Those with complex issues, mental health needs etc find it easier to speak with someone face to face. More can be done in these situations face to face than by other means. If we need to see paperwork it is much easier face to face. The interpersonal skills used in face to face enable exploring and resolving of issues which may not be picked up with other communication methods.

In our semi rural area, having the variety of means of accessing advice is essential. Those unable to access public transport either due to the cost, availability or not having their own transport rely on technology to engage in local services. Having access to the variety of channels provided by Citizens Advice will actually allow access to advice for some of the most vulnerable.

**Q4.** Ideally these services should be provided every day of the week. Citizens Advice research, previously mentioned, found that 16% wanted a service that was also open at weekends.

It will obviously be necessary to balance resources (including funding) in relation to demand and availability of staff.

**Q5.** Social Value - value for money

A voluntary advice service can provide value for money as they use highly trained volunteers to deliver advice for the core service supported by competent supervisors and management team. Our volunteers (approx 70) contributed in excess of £240,000 value to the organisation in 2013/14.

Volunteering is also an value to the volunteers. We continually invest in volunteers' recruitment, development and management. By ensuring they are supportive and constructive environments, bureaux enable a range of people with different skills and backgrounds to volunteer. We help to develop individuals' personal abilities, and the way that they feel about themselves, their skills and their community. With a wide range of roles and opportunities available, we provide volunteers with comprehensive training and valuable work experience, enabling people to increase their skills, confidence and employability – therefore contributing to the local economy

Value to society

The service has additional benefits for society through happier, healthier and more productive citizens. Local Citizens Advice bureaux have the support of a national body whose research and information helps supply both national and local governments with details of the effects that current policies and actions have on the vulnerable members of society.

Value to communities

By strengthening communities and bringing people closer together, this improves social cohesion and gives people a greater stake in their local area. Partnerships have been formed with local organisations and a number have referred their service users to us who require advice that is outside their remit.

Specialist advice is currently available which is beyond the remit of a generalist advice service. We continually seek funding to enable residents to access this level of advice.

Citizens Advice is a known and trusted brand. Our advice service is quality assured (The Advice Quality Standard being a benchmark for quality in service provision and advice) so residents and stakeholders can have confidence in the service. This means we can be consistent in meeting the needs of diverse groups. Tools provided by Citizens Advice enable us to continually keep up to date with changing legislation etc. We have high levels of data protection and every member of staff, including volunteers, is trained and regularly retrained in information assurance.

Funding provided by Rochford Dictrict Council contributes towards the core cost. The current levels of service cannot be provided solely with this funding. We are able to secure other funding, albeit at a much lower level than the local authority's contribution, to provide additional services. (£24k 2013/14 unrestricted towards the core service, further restricted funding for projects was secured which contributed in part to the core costs)

**5.** **Principles and features to guide the design of future advice delivery**

* **Planning for future known changes within the District** - such as demographic changes.
* **Promoting, encouraging and enabling Digital Inclusion** - Identifying opportunities to utilise technology, and to encourage greater use of digital channels.
* **Encouraging Self Help** - Greater emphasis on actively supporting customers to develop and enhance key skills such money management, to encourage a greater degree of self help for those that are able to do so, whilst continuing to support those that cannot.
* **Delivering High Quality Services that achieve the best value for money** - with face to face services being the most expensive way to deliver services, the Provider will need to show that they are maximising the opportunities to use other less expensive channels for delivering services, including greater use of telephone and e-mail.
* **Maximising the opportunities for securing external funding** - having a clear strategy for minimising reliance on Council funding, and demonstrating achievements in securing funding.
* **Maximising opportunities for working with partners** - recent funding through the Cabinet Office has developed opportunities to ensure advice services are co-ordinated with partners to provide the highest quality, and greatest value for money.  This will be increasingly important as Universal Credit starts to roll out, and local partnerships to support customer through the changes will be essential.
* **Adding value and enhancing the services delivered by the Council** - avoiding any duplication of services, and working positively and effectively with Officers to achieve the best outcome for customers.
* **Focused on outcomes** - being able to demonstrate the value to both the individuals receiving help and to the wider community.

**5.1 Our Key drivers**

The Council’s current Corporate Plan runs from 2014-17. Over this period we will continue to improve our services to local communities and enhance the difference we can make to the local economy and the environment. Three themes have been identified which will act as the focus for this improvement – **Place, Homes and Economic Growth**.

A robust advice service, particularly for the most vulnerable, will allow the council to offer support to residents on a range of issues, but particularly in relation to personal finances and housing.

**5.2 Financial context**

The reality of deficit reduction means that much of the public sector, and local government especially, has had to find new and innovative ways of working to ensure that budget targets are met. Despite these pressures, in recent years Rochford Council has continued to support its voluntary and community sector awarding over £100,000 of grants annually. Over £70,000 was given to local advice providers in 2015/16, with the local CAB receiving £67,000.

Essex County Council has agreed to joint commission on this project.

**5.3 Access to services and outreach facilities**

Advice services have historically been delivered from two sites, one in Rochford and one in Rayleigh. The Council will discuss accommodation options with the new Provider prior to the start of the contract. Accommodation at the Civic Suite, Rayleigh and Back Lane, Rochford (currently occupied by the Rochford & Rayleigh CAB) is available should it be decided that this is the most effective way to deliver the service based on identified need. The intention is that there will be more emphasis on outreach, developing partnerships with parish councils, local libraries and community organisations in the District.

**5.4 Type of service to be provided – general / specialist**

Current funding to the Rochford & Rayleigh CAB only covers a core service of general advice. Specialist advice is gained through separate project funding. The commissioned service will continue with this arrangement.

**5.5 Telephone advice and the Internet**

With face to face services being the most expensive way to deliver services, the Provider will need to show that they are maximising the opportunities to use other less expensive channels for delivering services, including greater use of telephone and e-mail.

**5.6 Language and communication**

The future Provider will need to be mindful of the needs of people for whom English is not the first language; who have low levels of literacy and numeracy; who have disabilities including sensory impairments and those who come from groups with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 and will endeavour to accommodate their needs and provide them with the best possible service, to include as far as resources allow the use of interpreters and translation services as required.

**5.7 Quality of Advice**

The future Provider will operate the core service to the Advice Quality Standard for ‘general help’ level services. The quality scheme for advice services is set nationally by the Legal Services Commission and audits are carried out regularly.

The quality of advice given and record-keeping of all paid staff and volunteers who advise the public will be monitored by the future Provider on a frequent and regular basis.

**6. Next steps**

A detailed specification will be prepared based on the information contained within this document to allow the commissioning of advice services for the Rochford District from April 2016 for three years. The award of the contract should be completed by December 2015.

**Further information**

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| * 1. Rochford District Ward Profiles

<http://www.rochford.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/rochford_district_area_profile>  |
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| * 1. Rochford District Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Data

<http://www.essexinsight.org.uk/Resource.aspx?ResourceID=382> * 1. Public Health England Health Profile – Rochford District

<http://www.apho.org.uk/resource/item.aspx?RID=142268>  |

1. The English Indices of Deprivation 2010 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile-group/mental-health/profile/severe-mental-illness/data#gid/8000027/pat/6/ati/101/page/0/par/E12000006/are/E07000200> 2011 figures [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. JSNA District Profile <http://www.essexinsight.org.uk/Resource.aspx?GroupID=2&ResourceID=382> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <http://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile-group/mental-health/profile/cmhp/data#gid/8000053/pat/44/ati/19/page/0/par/E40000002/are/E38000007> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <http://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile-group/mental-health/profile/severe-mental-illness/data#gid/8000030/pat/6/ati/101/page/0/par/E12000006/are/E07000200> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)