

Strategy for Advice Services in Bristol 2006 to 2010

Bristol Joint Planning Board for Advice

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1 CONTEXT OF STRATEGY

1.1 CORPORATE PRIORITIES

The Bristol Community Strategy 2006-26, produced by the Bristol Partnership sets out a 20 year vision for Bristol. The goal is 'to make Bristol one of Europe's leading cities, to improve quality of life throughout Bristol, remove disadvantage and respond effectively to the needs of local communities'. "A city where no-one is disadvantaged". The strategy recognises the need for "a diverse and accessible city...where everyone is valued and can thrive economically, culturally and socially."

The Director of Public Health for Bristol¹ believes action needs to be taken on health inequalities: "Health has improved faster for the better off, so the gap between rich and poor is getting wider. Our aim is to close that gap, so health improves faster for those sections of the population who currently experience poorer health (people on low income, those in socially deprived neighbourhoods, those in vulnerable and marginalised groups)."

The Community Legal Service five year strategy published in March 2005 had two key themes – a focus on the needs of the client and working in partnership. Their priorities are

- to provide services in an integrated way
- ensure joint planning
- devolving decisions down to local level
- to obtain best value for money.

Key proposals for the strategy include the introduction of Community Legal Advice Centres and Community Legal Advice Networks and the introduction of the Preferred Supplier Scheme by 2009.

Many of the future plans for the Community Legal Service (CLS) are built upon research undertaken by the Legal Services Commission (LSC)² which found that 33% of people are likely to face a civil justice problem. Those most vulnerable to social exclusion are more likely to experience civil justice problems in particular those:

- With long term health problems or disabilities
- Lone parents
- Those living in high rented or high density accommodation
- The unemployed and those on very low incomes
- Those aged between 25 and 44.

¹ The Health of Bristol 2004. Annual Report of the Director of Public Health. September 2005.

² 'Causes of Action: Civil Law and Social Justice. P. Pleasence. 2nd Edition.

Almost half of those who said they had been a victim of crime, and over half of those who admitted criminal activity, had one or more legal problem. Civil justice problems lead to further problems and the estimated cost of these over three years was at least £13 billion.

Around 15% of those who tried to get help failed to do so. Awareness of local services is a significant influence on whether action is taken to solve problems. A large number of people are unaware of local services and these people take action much less often. The research demonstrates the importance of

- Visible and accessible advice services
- Effective referral systems.

1.2 DEPRIVATION IN BRISTOL

1.2.1 DEPRIVATION

Below is a summary of the key deprivation issues for Bristol from the Indices of Deprivation 2004.³

- In terms of multiple deprivation, Bristol has 35 Super Output Areas (SOAs) - 14% of the City – in the worst 10% nationally. This includes 2 SOAs (Lawrence Hill) that are in the worst 100 SOAs in the country.
- Three SOAs in Lawrence Hill and Ashley wards are in the worst 100 nationally for income deprivation and employment deprivation.
- Three SOA's in Southville and Filwood are in the worst 100 nationally for crime. However, 104 of Bristol SOA's (40%) are in the worst 10% nationally for crime.
- 16% of the population in Bristol live in areas with income deprivation affecting children amongst the worst 10% nationally. Parts of Lawrence Hill, Ashley and Filwood wards include children living in deprivation among the worst 1% nationally. 27% of all 0-4 years' olds in Bristol live in the most deprived 20% of wards.

On the basis of evidence from the SOA data and the Indices of Multiple Deprivation for Bristol, three new Priority Regeneration Areas have been identified for the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund 2006-8. These are:

- The Northern Arc (Southmead, Kingsweston, Henbury, Lockleaze, Avonmouth)
- Inner City/East Side (Lawrence Hill, Ashley)
- Central South (Windmill Hill, Filwood, Hartcliffe and Whitchurch)

³ These are indices based on separate domains of deprivation, which include income, employment, health and disability, education, skills and training and crime.

1.2.2 HEALTH INEQUALITY

The Equity Audit is a tool to help understand and address health inequalities across the population to compare the health of those facing income deprivation and those most affluent. When comparing death rates from coronary heart disease – people in Bristol living with the highest levels of deprivation experience the worst death rates. In North Bristol there is a three to four fold variation in rates between the most and least well off and in Bristol South and West the variation is two to three fold.

The PCT recommends “The current patterns of inequalities should be addresses with targeted investments and create partnership work to tackle root causes...to ensure an integrated approach to tackling the determinants of ill health.”

1.2.3 POPULATION ESTIMATES AND TRENDS

Recent figures suggest the population is 391,500. This is projected to rise by 8.8% to 425,900 by 2028. The increases are projected in the 25-44 age groups. Bristol has a relatively young population with smaller proportions of older people compared to the country as a whole. There are approximately 92,600 children and young people under aged 19.

1.2.4 DISTRIBUTION OF BME GROUPS

Since the 1991 census, the proportion of the Bristol population from BME communities increased from 5.1% to 8.2% - a growth of 61% . All wards, with the exception of Ashley have seen rises in both the proportion of BME groups resulting in more diversity across the city. The largest ethnic group is the Black Caribbean community (1.5%) followed by the Indian community (1.2%) and those from the Pakistani community (1.1%). In addition to the established BME communities, there have been new communities of asylum seekers. The fastest growing has been Somali residents – a mixture of asylum seekers, refugees, British residents and some with EURO citizenship. There are no official figures but it is estimated there are between 10-15,000 Somalis living in Bristol. Many of them require assistance to access welfare benefits, housing, health and other services.⁴

In 1991 46% of Bristol’s BME population lived in three wards – Ashley, Easton and Lawrence hill. By 2001, this had declined to 29%. Findings from the recent review of BME housing needs included barriers to accessing services including the following:

- A lack of resources to pay for the interpreting and translation services for BME households that speak little or no English.
- Some areas in the city are perceived to be unsafe because of racial harassment.
- There is a lack of culturally sensitive services for BME people with multiple needs e.g. women suffering domestic violence.

1.3 BACKGROUND TO THE ADVICE STRATEGY

1.3.1 BRISTOL REVIEW OF ADVICE SERVICES

In 2005, Bristol City Council commissioned Michael Bell Associates to undertake a strategic review of the provision of advice services⁵ in the City. The main aim of the review was to make an assessment of the extent to which advice services funded by Bristol City Council were “fit for purpose and value for money”. The Review of Advice Services was published in July 2005 and provided an analysis of current advice services, identified advice needs in the City and made recommendations regarding future provision. These recommendations can be found in Appendix 1.

A summary of the key findings from the Review of Advice Services, relevant to this strategy, can be found in Section 3 with some figures updated where the consultants have been alerted to material changes.

A key finding of the Review was “the absence of an overarching strategy to inform the funding, planning and co-ordination of advice services⁶”. The Review recommended the establishing of a Joint Planning Board and this should oversee the development of a strategy for advice services linked to the corporate goals of key bodies including Bristol City Council, the Legal services Commission and the Primary Care Trust⁷.

Bristol City Council engaged Michael Bell Associates to help implement the findings from the review and assist develop a three year strategy for advice and legal services in the city.

1.4 NEXT STEPS

To turn the aspirations within this strategy into operational outcomes the following activities will be required by the Bristol Joint Planning Board for Advice:

The development of service level agreements between advice providers and Bristol City Council and Bristol Primary Care Trust (as the funders) to include:

⁴ Bright Project: Client Needs Survey Report. April 2006.

⁵ Advice services are those delivering advice in areas of social welfare law defined by the Joint Planning Board.

⁶ “Review of Advice Services: Bristol City Council” July 2005. Michael Bell Associates. P.7 para 1.2.1.

⁷ ditto. Recommendations 1 & 2.

- Output and outcome measures that reflect the areas of law to be provided, the levels of intervention (from information to casework) and the geographical and communities of interest to be served.
- The monitoring framework
- The review process including criteria for assessment and timetables.

Consideration of external assurance of quality in suppliers in the light of the LSC's intention to withdraw from this activity for those organisations it no longer funds

An overall process for reviewing this Strategy including establishing measurable outcomes and timetable.

2 THE CONTEXT FOR ADVICE SERVICES

2.1 ROLE OF ADVICE SERVICES

The Review of Advice Services detailed the role of advice work: how it can assist the most vulnerable members of the community and address issues including deprivation and social exclusion.

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.”⁸

Research (referred to in Benefit Take Up Appendix) has found that maximising peoples 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. Increased local benefit levels can have a direct impact on the local economy and improve central governments calculation of the Formula Grant. In Scotland research found that one job is created for every £41,000 of benefit expenditure raised. The jobs created are also locally situated – contributing to area based regeneration. It is estimated anything from £120 to £240 million benefit is unclaimed in Bristol. A recent project in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets found that every £1 invested on benefit take-up raised £12 in additional benefit.⁹

On the basis of these figures £1million invested in benefit take up would generate £12 million of additional income for some of the poorest members of the community. This in turn would lead to the creation of almost 300 new jobs in deprived communities.

Legal advice and information services have a unique contribution to make in assisting the Bristol Partnership to achieve many of its strategic objectives, in particular tackling poverty and deprivation. By assisting citizens to exercise their rights, legal advice and information services can make a contribution to the improvement of the quality of services provided by both the public and voluntary sectors.

2.2 POLICY CHANGES TO ADVICE SERVICES

There are a number of significant proposals regarding legal and advice services that present a major challenge to the advice sector and could have a major impact on funding and access to advice services in the future¹⁰. These include:

- The Legal Services Commission Strategy
- The Preferred Supplier consultation

⁸ Regeneration and Renewal: A Good Practice Guide for London Advice Agencies. April 2002. Lasa.

⁹ ‘Claim the Max!’ Report on the evaluation of Income Maximisation Project. LB Tower Hamlets. May 2004.

¹⁰ Information from Advice Services Alliance briefing ‘Issues Facing the Advice sector’ June 2006

- The Carter Review

2.2.1 COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE STRATEGY

In July 2005 the Legal Services Commission published "Making Legal Rights a Reality"¹¹ the long awaited strategy for the development of the Community Legal Service (CLS) over the next five years. After undertaking a review of the CLS to date, a number of key points emerged:

- The need to provide clear leadership and strategic direction for the CLS
- Recognition that many CLSPs have not delivered the evidence to identify local need
- Many people do not get legal advice and there is need to improve early access to advice
- Advice services need to be provided in an integrated and seamless manner
- Services should be commissioned against agreed targets on access and range of services.

There is a commitment to using the law as a way of achieving positive change for both individuals and communities. There is also a recognition that the CLS needs to work with other funders 'to agree priorities and to obtain best value for money'.

The strategy suggests ways of improving accessibility of advice which include:

- An expansion of telephone advice services;
- The piloting of Community Legal and Advice Centres (CLACs) to provide local social welfare law services;
- The piloting of Community Legal and Advice Networks (CLANs) to deliver a 'seamless' service over wider areas.

CLACs would be based in major urban centres with possibly satellite offices in the most deprived communities. CLACs will cover a broad range of categories of law (debt, housing, welfare benefits, community care and employment) and will have effective links with suppliers in other specialist areas of law.

2.2.2 PREFERRED SUPPLIER CONSULTATION

The Legal Services Commission is proposing that, from 2009, it will contract only with 'preferred suppliers'. In order to achieve this status there will be strict eligibility criteria and agencies will be required to have significant performance and financial management procedures in place, be able to demonstrate long-term sustainability and be able to conduct the business relationship with the Commission electronically. Whilst it is thought many not for profit (NfP) agencies will be able to satisfy these requirements, a number of current

¹¹ *Making legal rights a reality. The LSC's Strategy for the Community Legal Service.* Legal Services Commission. July 2005.

contract holders may not. Given the proposal is to move towards contracting with fewer, larger suppliers, there will a number of NfP contract holders who may not secure contracts post 2009. A reduction in contract holders is likely to mean a significant number of Bristol residents in need of legal advice may be denied access to advice unless accompanied by alternative means of ensuring access (e.g. through contractual or service level agreement requirements).

2.2.3 THE CARTER REVIEW

The main objective of the review is to set out how to deliver the best way of buying and delivering legal services. Published on July 13th 2006 one of the key recommendations is that payments for civil legal aid services should be made through standard fixed fees in future. These fees should be wrapped up in block contracts based on legal aid suppliers meeting output targets and set performance standards. As well as output targets, contracts should require a certain number of hours to be worked. The fixed fee will be based on notional hours worked, with information on actual hours worked being monitored by the LSC.

The final report makes 62 recommendations about moving towards a market-based approach to legal aid, based on quality and value for money.

Amongst the recommendations are:

- Peer review assessment to be rolled out nationally, with a longer term view of introducing best value tendering from April 2009 onwards;
- Not-for-profit agencies and solicitors firms to explore, with the LSC, the possibility of expansion into other areas of civil and family law;
- There is not one model for community legal advice centres (CLACs) and that they are allowed by the LSC to develop in a pragmatic and flexible fashion;
- The first wave of CLACs should be carefully evaluated on their impact;
- Community legal advice networks (CLANs) should be developed in a similar fashion, building on existing informal networks;
- The LSC should strive to improve co-ordination of funding with other funders of legal advice services, including local authorities and government departments.

2.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR ADVICE AND LEGAL SERVICES IN BRISTOL

The above proposals all present a major challenge to the advice and legal services sector and many of these proposals could reduce the supply of legal services to residents of Bristol.

Fixed fee proposals may force advice agencies from taking complex cases that may take longer than average. For example, representing someone where English is not a first language or a person with mental health problems.

The proposal that the LSC will only contract with Preferred Suppliers from 2009 may mean only the larger, well resourced not-for-profit agencies could consider being a preferred supplier. This could result in smaller agencies losing their LSC contracts.

Of the two new proposed delivery models, Bristol may be approached to introduce a Community Legal Advice Centre. Whilst some people acknowledge some of the notions behind CLACs and CLANs have some resonance, in particular promoting joined up working and holistic approaches to casework, there is still a concern that this new 'brand' is not needed where there are reasonably well co-ordinated advice provision with providers who network effectively such as in Bristol. Carter is proposing that a flexible approach is needed based on local need. A CLAC and CLAN are being piloted in the coming years and before considering such a model of advice provision, the results of the evaluation should be studied and clear benefits to the City and its residents should be identified before proceeding.

Currently the not-for-profit advice sector in Bristol holds Legal Services Commission contracts worth over £535,000 per annum delivering 8-10,000 hours of free legal advice to the poorest residents of Bristol. For many residents they are able to access this advice in their own communities from neighbourhood services governed by local people. In addition, specialist housing, debt, benefits, immigration and employment advice is available from specialist not-for-profit cross city agencies with LSC contracts. For many agencies LSC contract funding is a significant portion of their income. The loss or reduction in such income could test the financial sustainability of some not-for-profit agencies in the City.

Private practice solicitors hold a total of 17 contracts in social welfare law (6 Mental Health, 4 immigration, 3 employment, 2 welfare benefit, 1 housing and 1 community care) with 15 contracts doing work under tolerance. This is a relatively small contribution to social welfare law work in the city, the majority of private practice concentrate on family law and criminal work.

2.4 CHANGING LEGAL NEEDS

There are constant changes to the social welfare legislation that impact upon advice and information providers. For example, during the last year there were over thirty significant changes to welfare benefits law. In recent years there has been the introduction of the Human Rights Act, the Disability Discrimination Act and the Civil Partnerships Act which have added to the need for advisers to have a wider knowledge base. The National Audit Office has recently observed that between 2000 and 2004 there were six Acts of Parliament and 364 Statutory Instruments affecting social security law¹².

¹² "Dealing with the complexity of the benefits system". National Audit Office. November 2005.

Since July 2005 changes just to the welfare benefit systems have included:

- Civil Partnerships – new benefit rules
- New Age-related payments for pensioners.
- New capital limits for means-tested benefits
- Changes to child care costs in Tax Credits
- Social Fund Reform

From October 2006 benefit changes include:

- New linking rules for those on Incapacity Benefit
- Change to Maternity Pay
- New Pathways to work pilots for incapacity claimants
- Work focused interview for Lone Parents

In addition, the national roll out of JobCentre Plus has caused huge problems. All Bristol advice centres have reported a significant increase in enquiries from people trying to make benefit claims through the new system. The Child Support Agency and Tax Credit system have both continued to operate in a grossly dysfunctional manner. More locally, advisers report problems with Bristol City Council Housing Benefit administration caused up to 20% of enquiries in the preceding year. A significant amount of advice worker time is being spent on dealing with the consequences of current administrative arrangements by these organisations.

New legislation and case law means advisers need to ensure they keep up-to-date with these changes in order to provide accurate advice. Resources are needed and are vital to purchase up-to-date information, as well as access to training and specialist support in order to prevent incorrect advice being given to the public. Advice agencies have a major role to play in influencing policy at both a local, regional and national level. Future policy consultations include Incapacity Benefit proposals.

3 ADVICE GAPS AND NEEDS

3.1 GAP ANALYSIS

3.1.1 ANARAK

The Review of Advice Services undertook an analysis of current advice provision against predicted advice need. This was undertaken using ANARAK, a computer-generated advice needs assessment model pioneered by Michael Bell Associates¹³. Based on a series of socio-economic factors that are considered likely to increase (or decrease) the need for advice, ANARAK calculates an **estimated** predicted advice need in a given area. These figures should only be seen as **indicators** of needs, rather than absolutes. This can be used as a starting point for planning local advice needs, not a blue print and provide a framework for the commissioning of services.

3.1.2 NUMBERS OF PEOPLE SEEKING HELP

ANARAK estimated that 17.5% of the population would seek advice in a year. From Bristol 2004 population figures, this would be equal to just under 70,000 people. This is based on 'ambient' level of demand – the people who would seek assistance. It does not take into account those individuals who do not realise they have a legal problem and do not seek assistance.

Recent research from the Legal Services Research Centre¹⁴ (LSRC) estimates that 33% of the population are likely to face a civil justice problem in any one year. Out of these they estimate 15% of those who try to get help fail to do so. This new research could put the range of those needing legal help in Bristol from anywhere between 70,000 to nearly 130,000 people per year.

3.1.3 CASE LENGTHS

The ANARAK model averages the length of time advice enquiries may take. The range varies from 20 minute for information and up to two hours for Specialist level casework. Since then, research by the Advice Services Alliance¹⁵ looked at casework times for Specialist level. It presented average case times for four categories of law: benefits, debt, housing and employment. In Bristol the **average** time spent on cases was as follows:

Areas of Law	Average case times Bristol
Benefit cases	182 minutes

¹³ For more details of ANARAK see Appendix 2. Review of Advice Services: Bristol City Council. July 2005.

¹⁴ See note 1.

¹⁵ Case Lengths under NfP Contracts. Advice Services Alliance. 2005

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Debt	271 minutes
Employment	414 minutes.
Housing	182 minutes

This would give an **overall average** case time of just over 4.5 hours for specialist work. (It should be noted that Bristol has below average case times in all four categories of law¹⁶ compared to the rest of the LSC regions).

3.1.4 REVISED CASE LEVELS AND ADVISER NEED

In July 2005 using ANARAK it was estimated that the **minimum** number of advisers required in the City would be 75 full time workers. It was estimated that there was the equivalent of 62.5 full time advisers in post.

Using the Review of Advice Services breakdown of levels of casework in Bristol¹⁷ and with the above research to produce a revised estimate of the adviser need for 2006:

ADVISER NEED 2006

Level	% of cases in category	Total Advice seeking population	Average Casework time	Total casework time	Adviser numbers ¹⁸
General Help	39%	27,300	1 hour	27,300	28.25
General Help with Casework	42%	29,400	2 hours	58,800	60.75
Specialist	19%	13,300	4.5 hours	59,850	62
Average/Total	100%	70,000	2.5 hours	145,950	151

¹⁶ ditto Annexe 5. Para 1.2

¹⁷ p.39 Review of Advice Services

¹⁸ Michael Bell Associates believe full time adviser delivers 966 hours advice per year. (e.g. 27,300 hours /966= 28.25)

3.1.5 ESTIMATED ADVICE NEED

This estimate is a **starting point** and needed to be adjusted and increased to take into account **local factors** that increase advice need. For example, providing advice to communities where English is not a first language, and/or where there is a high rate of illiteracy and/or where there are major changes in legislation will require longer time to be spent with each client or more clients seeking advice. These factors would require an increase in resources needed to provide advice.

The Review of Advice Services identified a number of factors local to Bristol that would increase the resources needed for advice beyond the ANARAK estimate. These include:

- Significant unmet demand reported by all advice agencies
- Somali population of 15-20,000 with high advice and language needs
- A substantial shortfall and unmet demand in the following areas of law:
 - Immigration
 - Housing
 - Employment
 - Community Care.
- A poor public transport system meaning that people are not able to travel to advice.
- Many people presenting 'cluster' or multiple problems – clients visiting advice centres had more than one legal problem¹⁹.

3.2 NOT FOR PROFIT ADVICE PROVISION IN BRISTOL

3.2.1 MODEL OF PROVISION

Section 4 of the Review of Advice Services gave a detailed picture of the not-for profit advice provision in Bristol. Below are is the current model of the key advice providers in the City. Appendix 10 and the Review of Advice Services detail all the agencies providing social welfare law advice. For the purpose of this strategy, Bristol City Council agreed it would concentrate on these key providers. The role of the remaining providers would be addressed at a later date.

- **Neighbourhood provision**
 - North Bristol Advice Centre
 - East Bristol Advice Centre
 - South Bristol Advice Service

¹⁹ The recent LRSC Research supported this and found people reporting up to six to eight problems each. This equates to an average of 1.75 problems a person.

St Paul's

- **City Wide**

CAB

- **Specialist City wide provision**

Avon and Bristol Law Centre

Bristol Debt Advice Centre

Shelter

BCC Welfare Rights and Money Advice Service

- **Neighbourhood** advice services provide mostly general help, general help with casework and three out of four have Specialist level contracts in at least the two key high areas of demand – welfare benefits and debt.
- The **City wide** CAB service generalist advice service. In addition to case work provide both training services and undertake policy work. They are currently looking to develop specialist projects working with groups such as prisoner's families, people with disabilities and travellers.
- **Specialist** services providing complex case work and representation. WRMAS works with local authority tenants and BCC service users. In addition they provide training and benefit take-up work which raised £3.4 million²⁰ in 2005-6.

The Review of Advice Services found this to be an effective model of provision. The geography and transport system necessitates the need to locally based provision with referrals to Specialists where necessary. There was no evidence of duplication but significant evidence of unmet need.

3.2.2 FUNDING OF PROVISION²¹

Agency	Total Funding ²²	Bristol CC Community Regeneration Division ²³	Legal Services Commission	PCT	Other Income ²⁴ 2004-5 figs
Avon and Bristol Law Centre	£436,400	£196,469	£94,500	0	£145,431
Bristol CABx	£238,625	£173,687 ²⁵	0	£20,669	£44,269

²⁰ WRMAS stats

²¹ This is approximate based on 2005 figures - a full audit of funding was not completed

²² This is approximate for all groups – updated from July 2005 report.

²³ 2005-6 rates for 12 month period

²⁴ 2004-5 figures

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Bristol Debt Advice Centre	£292,068	£45,981	£120,500	0	£125,587
East Bristol Advice Centre	£298,674	£18,674	0	0	£280,000 ²⁶
North Bristol Advice Centre	£329,717	£52,147	£112,648	£3,000	£161,922
Shelter ²⁷	£302,000	0	£93,000	0	£209,000
South Bristol Advice Centre	£129,642	£46,642	£45,000	0	£38,000
St. Paul's Advice Centre	£148,966	£72,360	£73,106	0	£3,500
BCC Welfare Rights & Money Advice Service	£661,000	0	0	0	£409,000 ²⁸ £252,000 ²⁹
Total	£2,837,092	£605,960	£538,754	£23,669	£1,668,709

Bristol City Council Community Regeneration also funds the following advice organisations:

- Child Poverty Action Group: £12,000 pa.
- Avon (University Settlement): £3,200 pa.

Please see Recommendation 11, Review of Advice Services, Bristol City Council. Michael Bell Associates. July 2005.

A small number of organisations are funded through the Bristol City VS Investment Budget to provide advice, information and advocacy services for socially excluded groups. The Review of Advice Services in 2005 found the Bangladeshi Association and the Disability Information and Advice Services were providing advice, information and advocacy in a number of areas of social welfare law. There was not sufficient evidence to establish if the Bristol & Avon Chinese Women's Group, Bristol and District Vietnamese Refugee Group and the Bristol Muslim Cultural Society were significant providers.

3.3 PRIVATE PRACTICE PROVISION

Private practice solicitors hold a total of 17 contracts in social welfare law (6 Mental Health, 4 immigration, 3 employment, 2 welfare benefit, 1 housing and 1 community care) with 15 contracts doing work under

²⁵ includes £23,000 for Charlotte Keel project

²⁶ Community at Heart money finishes 2007

²⁷ 20% of funding for work in South Gloucestershire.

²⁸ BCC Neighbourhood & Housing

²⁹ Supporting People

tolerance. This is a relatively small contribution to social welfare law work in the city, the majority of private practice concentrate on family law and criminal work.

3.4 COMPARISON OF NFP AND PRIVATE PRACTICE PROVISION

LSC Contracts	Private practice	Not for Profit sector
Welfare benefits	2	6
Housing	1	3
Immigration	1	4
Debt	0	5
Employment	3	1
Community Care	1	0
Total	8	19

Further details of service current service outputs are available in the full Review of Advice Services report. However, it is worth noting that the issue of substantial numbers of newly arrived communities adds significantly to the workload of advice agencies and the complexity of their needs reduces the throughput of cases as interventions dealing with multiple problems tend to take considerable longer to undertake.

3.5 GAPS AND DEMANDS

Using what is known about those people who are most likely to experience civil justice problems (Para 1.1) and the detailed information on deprivation in Bristol, it may be possible to predict the areas of Bristol with highest advice need.

The starting point would be the three Priority Regeneration Areas

- The Northern Arc (Southmead, Kingsweston, Henbury, Lockleaze, Avonmouth)
- Inner City/East Side (Lawrence Hill, Ashley)
- Central South (Windmill Hill, Filwood, Hartcliffe and Whitchurch)

Within these areas attention should be focused on those most vulnerable to social exclusion who have been found to be more likely to experience civil justice problems:

- People long term health problems or disabilities
- Lone parents
- Those living in high rented or high density accommodation
- The unemployed and those on very low incomes

- Those aged between 25 and 44.
- Victims of crime.

THE STRATEGY

4 KEY PRINCIPLES

4.1 EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

Enable people to obtain independent advice to help them access services, challenge incorrect decisions and secure their rights and entitlements.

Overcome disadvantage suffered by specific sections of the community in getting access to services and advice because of discrimination and deprivation.

Work in partnership with specialist advice providers, BME community organisations and other key stakeholders to assess and prioritise community need in order to target resources effectively, in particular new and emerging communities.

4.2 PARTNERSHIP

Promote the role of advice services within the Bristol Partnership and the local community and recognise the role of advice services in tackling deprivation and social exclusion within the city.

Promote the strategic partnership between Bristol City Council, the Primary Care Trust and the Legal Services Commission to enable the development of advice services in the City.

Work in partnership with the advice and community sector to address problems caused by poor public services and bring the wider policy issues to the attention of local, regional and central government.

Continue to support the development of Advice Centres for Avon (ACFA) in promoting partnership working and quality advice services.

4.3 MAXIMISE RESOURCES

Use local authority funding to facilitate funding of advice from other sources.

Encourage collaborative working, partnerships and joint funding to increase access to quality advice services.

Commit to exploring innovation in the delivery and promotion of advice services.

Maximise current resources to ensure efficient and effective quality advice services delivering value for money.

Develop and implement a comprehensive referral network to provide a better gateway to advice services.

5 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2007-2010

Strategic Aim:	
Contribute to the reduction of poverty and deprivation by working in partnership to improve access for the public to quality advice and information services.	
Objective	Activity
Improve access for the public to quality advice services through the development of a co-ordinated approach to the provision of advice services through the Bristol Joint Planning Board.	Improve early access to advice by working with local authority, PCT and community organisation front-line staff to enable them to understand the role of advice and signpost users to services.
	Support community organisations (prioritising those providing services in community languages) to better understand the role of advice services and provide signposting to appropriate services for their users.
	Promote residents understanding of their rights and entitlements.
	Improve referral arrangements between advice providers and voluntary and statutory agencies.
	Establish a working party to further examine the advice needs of people with mental health problems and their carers.
	Ensure that key mainstream advice providers adopt a 'triage model' to assess enquiries and enable appropriate referrals.
Ensure the local authority and other resources for advice services are employed strategically to meet identified needs, recognising the need for diverse provision and the changing needs of the community.	Work with the City Council and the Legal Services Commission to preserve current investment in Bristol advice services and work with ACFA to develop new investment sources.
	Priority should be given to secure funding for advice services that meet the needs of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Somali community • those East Bristol
	Future advice needs and priorities should be assessed using Super Output Area deprivation data on, poverty, health and crime. ³⁰
	Within the context of the Preferred Supplier Scheme, work with the Legal Services Commission to maintain as far as possible the

³⁰ Recommendation 5. Review of Advice Services 2005.

	<p>current level and mix of suppliers.</p> <p>Explore jointly with the Legal Services Commission the potential to expand advice provision in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 1 and 2 Immigration advice services;³¹ • Housing advice; • Community Care advice. <p>Explore more effective use of investment within the advice sector by sharing 'back office' costs such as financial management, Information Technology support and fundraising.</p> <p>Review funding to small advice providers (2 or less staff) to assess if services should be encouraged to merge and benefit from economies of scale.³²</p> <p>Prioritise resources securing to develop the advice sectors fundraising capacity.³³</p>
Support the development of innovative advice services and ways to increase public awareness of rights and entitlements.	<p>Explore the Legal Services Commission CLACs model and the impact of the CLACs Pilot to identify potential benefits it may bring to the delivery of advice services.</p> <p>Explore the use of corporate communication channels, such as web sites, neighbourhood information points and newsletters, to promote awareness of advice and rights and entitlements.</p> <p>Encourage the local authority to continue investment in benefit take-up and explore working in partnership with the PCT to undertake this work in partnership.</p>
Improve future service delivery by enhancing the capacity of advice and legal services to provide accessible high quality training and development services to develop a diverse range of advice providers and ensure diversity in the advice workforce.	<p>Work with ACFA to identify the workforce requirements of the Advice Strategy and co-ordinate the development of appropriate training and support to increase the number of skilled advisers, in particular those from socially excluded communities.³⁴</p>
Develop and promote partnership	<p>Inform the Bristol Partnership and other key bodies of the impact of</p>

³¹ Recommendation 9. Review of Advice Services 2005.

³² Recommendation 11. Review of Advice Services 2005.

³³ Recommendation 13. Review of Advice Services 2005.

³⁴ Recommendation 8. Bristol Review of Advice Services 2005.

Strategy for Advice Services in Bristol

working on advice provision across the statutory and voluntary sector through the Bristol Joint Planning Board.	advice work in the City. Ensure the strategy for advice services is closely connected to the local authority and other partners wider policy objectives in particular those addressing poverty and deprivation.
Use social policy findings from advice services to address problems caused by public services and engage with local and central government to find solutions.	Bring together the advice services and local authority to seek continuous improvement in the administration and delivery of Council Tax Benefit, Housing Benefit and debt recovery procedures. ³⁵

³⁵ Recommendation 19

APPENDICES

6 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM REVIEW OF BRISTOL ADVICE SERVICES.

Recommendation 1

It is important that the future planning of advice services is more widely owned by the full spectrum of public sector stakeholders and that the work of the sector is seen to be assisting them in meeting their respective agendas. To this end a Joint Planning Board should be established which, in addition to advice sector representatives, includes senior officers from the City Council's housing, regeneration and social services departments, the two PCTs and the Legal Service Commission. Other bodies, such as neighbouring local authorities Government Office for South West, representatives from minority community organisations and other funders, may be involved as permanent or *ad hoc* members of this Board as appropriate.

Recommendation 2

A future strategy for advice services needs to be devised, which is overtly linked to the wider corporate goals of the following key bodies:

- € **Bristol City Council** in relation to Social Inclusion and the Community Strategy
- € **The Legal Services Commission** in relation to access to justice
- € **The Primary Care Trusts** in relation to the reduction of health inequalities and the promotion of good public health.

The strategy needs to explicitly acknowledge the contribution of advice services to meeting these broader objectives. The respective local individual strategies and plans of the above bodies need to be informed by the Bristol advice strategy in terms of supporting the engagement of the advice sector in delivering relevant services to meet strategic objectives.

Recommendation 3

The Joint Planning Board should use this review as an opportunity to agree a definition of advice that is both consistent with wider sector understanding and that can also be applied as a tool to assess which activities merit funding as advice services.

Recommendation 4

Our proposals for better strategic oversight and co-ordination of advice services suggest an enhanced role for ACFA. Funding should be made available to support ACFA's liaison, development and coordination functions – this should be possible within the Service Level Agreements by reducing the required advice outputs of the agencies concerned.

Recommendation 5

Super Output Area (SOA) data should be used to inform the future planning of advice services. However, additional resources should also be deployed to tackle areas of high advice need, using an “assertive” model (e.g. targeted take-up campaigns) in order to supplement “passive” methods of delivery (e.g. waiting for individuals to identify a problem and seek assistance). We consider that such active campaigns should take the form of a special, fixed-term project delivered either by the City Council's own welfare rights service or with a geographically appropriate voluntary sector agency.

Recommendation 6

Service Level Agreements should be used to help shift the balance of provision towards early intervention. It should be acknowledged that such a shift should be undertaken over a period of years to prevent emergency casework being left unassisted.

Recommendation 7

The Joint Planning Board should offer to commission ACFA to carry out a feasibility study into the development of a single City-wide advice line for all members of the public requiring and being prepared to make use of telephone advice. The study would identify the most appropriate host organisation and provide a draft protocol for referral/signposting between the telephone service and other advice providers.

Recommendation 8

The Joint Planning Board should consider the workforce requirements of any future advice strategy and commission ACFA to co-ordinate and oversee the development of existing training programmes with a view to increasing the pool of skilled advice workers and volunteers, with an emphasis on individuals from socially excluded communities. The content and amount of training should also be consistent with the “shape” of the local advice sector as defined by the strategy in terms of levels and types of provision. Activities should include scoping potential funding sources, such as the Learning and Skills Council and European Social Fund.

Recommendation 9

The Joint Planning Board should look at providing funding for training and resources to assist with the complex registration process to enable advice centres to train for Office of Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) Level 1 and Level 2 in immigration advice. They should also work with the Legal Services Commission to prioritise the development of more specialist immigration advice providers in the not-for-profit and private sector.

Recommendation 10

BCC and the Joint Planning Board should explore if this role can be formalised within these posts and other these skills and training developed with other front-line staff in both the statutory and voluntary sector.

Recommendation 11

The Joint Planning Board should review the funding to small (less than two staff) advice providers and assess whether services should be encouraged to merge to benefits from economies of scale in management and overhead costs as well as long-term sustainability, whilst ensuring access to advice is maintained.

Recommendation 12

The City Council should second a member of its planning team to the advice sector in order to review the adequacy of all premises occupied by advice organisations and seek to identify other parts of the Council's estate that may be more appropriate for the provision of advice.

Recommendation 13

There is a pressing need to invest in the local advice sector's overall fundraising capacity in order to ensure that agencies can maintain and improve access to non-BCC sources of funding to maintain and develop advice services in the City. The Joint Planning Board should prioritise support for these activities via, for example, allocating funds either for intra-sector training/skills and knowledge sharing or the commissioning of outside agencies to carry out this function.

Recommendation 14

The Joint Planning Board should develop a common monitoring framework to be adopted by all BCC-funded advice providers and should also seek to engage other funders in securing widespread recognition

and adoption of this framework. In the medium term, funds should be ring fenced to subsidise agencies' investment in the technology necessary to support this monitoring during future years.

Recommendation 15

The Joint Planning Board determines which agencies are defined as advice providers and this should be included in the common service level agreement framework which, reflecting both the work of the agency and city-wide need, should define the nature and level of advice to be provided.

Recommendation 16

The Joint Planning Board should acknowledge and promote these projects and work with funders to secure resources to mainstream successful provision.

Recommendation 17

There are a significant number of community organisations that undertake a signposting or community advocacy role in relation to social welfare issues. Their contribution has not been included in this review, but BCC should consider mapping the location and scope of the work they undertake as these groups have a central role in supporting communities that face obstacles to accessing advice and other services.

Recommendation 18

The Joint Planning Board should establish a working group comprising the PCTs and relevant social services teams to further examine the advice needs of people with mental health problems and their carers and look to the joint commissioning of services, e.g. through Section 11 arrangements, where these will be consistent with their wider objectives.

Recommendation 19

The Joint Planning Board should seek an early revision of the protocols relating to the administration of Housing Benefit and Council debt recovery services.

7 BENEFIT TAKE-UP IN BRISTOL

It is well known that many people who are entitled to benefits fail to claim them and researchers have extensively explored the reasons for this.

The research³⁶ shows that people fail to claim benefits they are entitled to because of a number of inter-related barriers:

- They have low lifestyle expectations
- They wish to retain independence by avoiding contact with the social security system
- They have negative perceptions about the social security system and benefit recipients
- They have had or have heard of previous personal negative experiences with the benefits system
- They have insufficient knowledge about the basic rules of entitlement
- People assume that the “system” has correctly awarded them everything they are entitled to.

This confirms a complex interplay of reasons why people don't claim – it is not just matter of having to advertise a benefit's existence, strategies which help people through the barriers by individualised approaches would seem to be suggested.

Advice agencies and local authorities have a crucial role to play in helping people overcome these barriers and are well placed to do so.

The local levels of benefit take-up have direct implications for the local authority and the local community:

- Part of central government calculations (“Formula Spending Share”) of its Formula Grant to local authorities are weighted to take account of certain proxy indicators of need (for example, the number of people receiving Income Support or Attendance Allowance). Improved take-up of certain benefits can help improve a local authority's share of total government grant³⁷.

³⁶ For example, see: Mayhew, V. (2002) 'Barriers to take-up among older people – a summary of the research' in Fleiss, A. (ed.) *Social Research Yearbook 2000/01*, Department for Work and Pensions. McConaghy et al (2003) *Entitled but not claiming ? Pensioners the minimum Income Guarantee and Pension Credit*. DWP Research report No 197 & Corden, A. (1999) 'Claiming entitlements: take-up of benefits, pp134 –155, in Ditch, J. (ed.) *Introduction to Social security*, Routledge. London.

³⁷ For example, each child in a family which receives Income Support or income based Jobseeker's Allowance may increase the share of government grant for social care services to children by up to £474 and each Attendance Allowance award increases grant for services to older people by £1010. However, this may not translate directly into extra money because numerous other calculations are performed which can offset these gains. Also increased take-up by other local authorities has an impact. See: www.local.communities.gov.uk/finance/0607/table3045/t3_r603.htm

- There is strong evidence that higher levels of benefit take-up result in local job creation³⁸ and the multiplier effect from local benefits spending has been shown to recycle benefits spending 1.7 times a year within the local economy³⁹. Improving benefit take-up can therefore be an element in an economic regeneration strategy.
- Levels of poverty in areas of poor take-up are worse than they should be
- Local authority income from care charges is reduced because service users have less disposable income.
- Poor benefit take-up directly affects local authority revenue because people are less able to meet their key liabilities such as rent, utilities and local taxes.
- There are links between higher level of benefit take-up and improved health outcomes⁴⁰.

THE NATIONAL PICTURE

The latest available data from the Department for Work and Pensions⁴¹ shows that the following patterns of benefit take-up apply nationally. Estimates of means tested benefit take-up are based on data from the Family Resources Survey and the sample sizes of this mean that local disaggregation produces very unreliable results.

(2002/3 data – latest available)

- **Income Support** (for non-pensioners)
Take-up rate between 85% and 95% by caseload
Take-up between 91% and 97% by expenditure (up to £880m unclaimed)
- **Minimum Income Guarantee** (IS for pensioners)
Take-up rate between 63% and 74% by caseload
Take-up between 73% and 83% by expenditure (up to £1260m unclaimed)
- **Pension Credit**
Take-up rate 69% (2004-05) by caseload⁴²
- **Housing Benefit**
Take-up rate between 84% and 90% by caseload
Take-up between 88% and 93% by expenditure
- **Council Tax Benefit**
Take-up rate between 65% and 71% by caseload

³⁸ Fraser of Allander Institute for Research on the Scottish Economy (2001 & 2003) *The Impact of welfare Spending on the Glasgow Economy*. University of Strathclyde. Glasgow (suggests one local job created for every £41,000 of benefit expenditure) & Craig, G. et al (2002) *Underwriting Citizenship for Older People :The Impact of Additional Benefit income for Older People. A Report for the National Audit Office*. Unpublished.

³⁹ Sacks, J. (2002) *the Money Trail: Measuring your Impact on the Local economy using LM3*. New economics Foundation. London

⁴⁰ For example, see Wiggan, J. and Talbot, C. (2006) *The benefits of welfare rights advice: a review of the literature*. National Association of Welfare Rights Advisers. www.nawra.org.uk & Abbott, S., Hobby, L. & Cotter, S. (2005) 'What is the impact on individual health of services in general practice settings which offer welfare benefits advice?' *Health and Social Care in the Community*, 1-8, 14 (1).

⁴¹ Source: DWP Benefit statistics: www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/income_analysis/Summary_of_Key_Results_for_0203.asp

⁴² Source: DWP Press release 11th May 2006

Take-up between 68% and 75% by expenditure

- **Jobseeker's Allowance** (Income Based)

Take-up rate between 55% and 70% by caseload

Take-up between 62% and 76% by expenditure

- **Disability Living Allowance**⁴³

Take-up rate of the care component 30% - 50% by caseload

Take-up rate of the mobility component 50-70% by caseload

- **Tax credits**

Take-up rate among in-work families in the South West is between 71% and 83% by caseload and between 80% and 94% by expenditure⁴⁴

Take-up of Council Tax Benefit has been falling in recent years (despite DWP publicity). This is partly because of Council Tax increases above inflation and higher levels of qualifying income for pensioners and those with children, which all have the effect of increasing the number who qualify. Different groups are known to have lower levels of benefit take-up - for example black and minority ethnic groups and young people. The DWP is currently examining the feasibility of more automated methods of tackling Council Tax Benefit take-up and has already undertaken several initiatives.

THE LOCAL PICTURE

Local benefit take-up rates are difficult to calculate (largely because the sample sizes used in national estimates are too small). There is some evidence that in poorer areas, benefit take-up tends to be higher because the need and incentives to claim are greater. This can further distort local extrapolations of national data. Equally in areas of higher poverty, there may be hidden under claiming caused by error and underpayment of benefit (something which does not feature in estimates of benefit take-up).

While it is an imprecise exercise, if the same levels of national take-up are applied to Bristol, it would suggest that the following numbers of people were missing out on benefits they are entitled to. However, this exercise can create statistical distortions in areas which already have a high take-up rate. For illustrative purposes, we have used the lower and higher estimate of under claiming:

⁴³ Source: DWP *In-house research summary No 5 1998*

⁴⁴ HM Revenue and Customs Analysis Team. *Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit Take-up rates 2003-4*. Published March 2006.

	Number of recipients in Bristol (Nov 2005)	Estimate of entitled non recipients	Estimated annual amount unclaimed ⁴⁵
Income Support	18,670	1,043 - 3,294	£2.39 - £7.55m
Pension Credit	18,025	8,098	£9.58m ⁴⁶
Housing Benefit ⁴⁷	8,700	1,035- 1,657	£1.7m - £2.86m
Council Tax Benefit ⁴⁸	10,900	4,862 – 5,869	£2.14m - £2.59m
Income based JSA (Feb 2005)	4,100	2,299 - 3,354	£5.3m - £7.77m
DLA care component	15,065	25,108 - 35,151	£50.99m - £71.39m ⁴⁹
DLA mob component	15,265	9,159- 15,265	££18.5m - £31.00m ⁵⁰
Attendance ⁵¹ Allowance	12,940	21,566 - 30,193	£56.7m - £79.41m ⁵²
Tax Credits (in-work families) ⁵³	28,900	2,442 - 11,804 ⁵⁴	£6.35m - £30.73m ⁵⁵

HOW DOES BENEFIT TAKE-UP IN BRISTOL COMPARE TO OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES?

A further indicator of take-up can be obtained by comparing benefit recipient numbers as a proportion of broadly eligible groups (e.g. people in the 2001 Census whose health is not good and the number of Disability Living and Attendance Allowance awards) between Bristol and some other local authorities. We have selected a mix of local authorities – some which are known to have done a lot of benefit take-up work and some which have similar socio-economic and geographical characteristics to Bristol.

⁴⁵DWP data for 2001/02 so likely to slightly underestimate because of lower benefit rates that year.

⁴⁶ National unclaimed median PC award: £42.20pw

⁴⁷ Figures for non IS/PCgc/ib JSA only

⁴⁸ Figures for non IS/PCgc/ib JSA only

⁴⁹ Based on average award of £39.06 pw in 2005

⁵⁰ Based on average award of £29.18pw in 2005

⁵¹ Assume same take-up rate as DLA. It is possible that the take-up rate of Attendance Allowance is better than DLA because it is a less complex benefit with narrower eligibility criteria

⁵² Assumes average award of £50.58 pw

⁵³ Finalised awards: Personal Tax Credits Statistics 2003/4. Published June 2005. HMRC.

⁵⁴ Based on regional average

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This exercise produces some useful insights into comparative levels of take-up but it is not a precise exercise because there is no data about the actual eligibility of people in the broadly entitled groups (e.g. income, capital, levels of disability and means tested eligibility among non working people aged 18 - 60).

The results can also be skewed by local population characteristics (e.g. if the local elderly population have an above average level of occupational pensions or a higher than average level of publicly funded care accommodation). However, despite these limitations we believe that these broad groups are proxy indicators of entitlement when used comparatively and help indicate where the priority areas for benefit take-up work might lie.

COMPARATIVE ESTIMATES OF BENEFIT TAKE-UP

	A	B	C	D
Bristol ⁵⁶	81.4%	22.2%	27.9%	68.4%
Cardiff	81.8%	18.9%	28.9%	54.2%
Derby	83.3%	19.72%	25.9%	59.6%
Manchester	72.7%	19.6%	42.8%	65.9%
Newcastle	73.7%	20.2%	34.8%	70.0%
Southampton	71.8%	14.7%	25.8%	57.8%
Trafford	85.2%	18.8%	24.5%	64.6%

A = Number of awards of AA and DLA as a percentage of the population whose health is “not good”

B = Percentage of population over 65 who receive Attendance Allowance

C = Percentage of over 60s who receive Pension Credit

D = Carers allowance awards (including cases with “underlying entitlement”⁵⁷) as percentage of the number of unpaid carers who spend 50 or more hours per week caring⁵⁸.

CONCLUSIONS AND SOLUTIONS

A number of priorities for benefit take-up work are suggested by this analysis:

⁵⁵ Calculated as follows: average Tax Credit award in South West for Working families multiplied by higher estimate of eligible non recipients in Bristol.

⁵⁶ Benefits data is most up to date available for all benefits: DWP quarterly statistics ending period February 2005.

⁵⁷ Carer’s Allowance is not payable to people who have another earnings replacement benefits such as Retirement Pension or Incapacity Benefit paid at or above the same amount as Carer’s Allowance. However, such people if they make a claim, are treated as having underlying entitlement which can increase the amount of means tested benefits they qualify for.

⁵⁸ This figure is based on the number of awards of Carers Allowance. Carers Allowance may be paid for those engaged in caring for 35+ hours pw but figures for local numbers of carers doing these hours are not readily available. However, when used as proxy indicator and on comparative basis, we believe this is a good indicator of take-up rates when compared across different local authorities.

- Take up of DLA and AA has improved significantly since our last analysis (undertaken during 2005, using data from 2004). However, it appears that there is still some scope for increasing the take-up rate and ongoing activity will be necessary in order to ensure that people who are newly entitled to these benefits are encouraged and helped to claim them.
- Take up of Carers Allowance compares well to other cities, reflecting the impact of local initiatives to improve take-up rates. However, we found that just 1,780 pensioners in Bristol⁵⁹ appear to have claimed underlying Carer's Allowance entitlement, which suggests that there is still a large untapped market for take-up work with older carers. In Bristol 12,940 people receive Attendance Allowance, 3,890 receive the highest care component of DLA and 6,940 receive the middle rate (total 23,770).
- As nationally, there is likely to be scope for take-up of Council Tax Benefit – low income owner occupiers are known to be a group which particularly under claim and the cumbersome administrative processes around Pension Credit mean that people on Pension Credit can fail to claim Council Tax and/or Housing Benefits. There is some evidence that prolonged difficulties with administration of Housing/Council Tax Benefit, not only deter potential claimants but the need to address these problems usually means that resources are not invested in take-up work (for example data matching work using HB/CTB data to identify people who are missing out on Pension Credit and Income Support).
- While we have no local empirical evidence, take-up rates of Jobseeker's Allowance by young men are often very poor. Crucial to tackling this will be an enhanced customer service by Jobcentre Plus.
- There is still scope for improving take-up of Pension Credit. Despite efforts by the DWP to address this.

⁵⁹ Source: February 2005 data using Statistical Tabulation Tool available at www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/tabtool.asp

8 KEY MONITORING DATA

Michael Bell Associates were asked in developing this strategy to outline key data that should be collected by advice agencies. Many agencies collect data in many different ways and at many different levels. They may record the number of enquiries, number of cases, the type or subject of the enquiry as well as the outcome of the enquiry. Many collect various data each client using the services this may include gender, ethnicity and age. Different data collection methods make it very difficult to report on advice use outputs across the city and make it impossible to undertake any comparison between agencies.

Advice Monitoring Data	
Client information	Address Postcode Age: 0-16, 16-25, 26-60, 60+ Gender Disability Ethnicity ⁶⁰
Advice	Area of law ⁶¹ Level of advice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information • General Help • General Help with Casework • Specialist Number of cases/new matter starts Number of enquiries
Outputs	Welfare Benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projected income gained over 12 months. • Actual Income Gained • Backdated Income. Debt 'write off' Repossessions prevented

⁶⁰ Be sure to detail ethnic groups present in local community – not just CRE list

⁶¹ E.G. Housing, Immigration, Debt, welfare benefits etc etc

9 ADVICE ORGANISATIONS INCLUDED IN THE 2005 REVIEW OF ADVICE SERVICES

Age Concern Bristol

Provides free, confidential advice to older people in Bristol through appointments, telephone advice outreach sessions and home visits. Advice and information on consumer, housing and welfare benefits.

Avon and Bristol Community Law Centre

Provides free legal advice and representation on employment, housing, immigration, debt, welfare benefits, community care, race, disability and sex discrimination issues via telephone, day and evening appointments from office in central Bristol and outreach sessions across the city. Also provides support and consultancy to advice agencies and voluntary organisations across the city, including legal advice on charity law to local voluntary organisations, and undertakes community development work to support and improve advice services in Bristol (including participation in ACFA and development of the BRIGHT Project)⁶².

Avon (University Settlement) Community Association

Provides a free confidential advice, information and advocacy service on a wide range of subjects including welfare benefits, housing, debt and employment. Services are provided from their own premises in Shirehampton principally for people in the BS11 postcode and adjoining areas.

Bangladeshi Association

Provides an advice and information service on housing, benefits, health, and immigration issues to the Bangladeshi community. Also provides advice and information on training and educational opportunities as well as running a supplementary school, youth groups and women's groups.

Bristol Citizens Advice Bureau

Provides free independent and confidential advice on a range of subjects including debt, housing, employment, immigration and welfare benefits. Services provided from a centrally based office and through outreach services.

Bristol Debt Advice Centre

Provides a free and confidential debt and money advice service to Bristol residents through telephone, appointments and outreach sessions.

⁶²BRIGHT is a consortium of eight community organisations seeking to develop advice and information services provided by BME community organisations in Bristol.

CHAS

Provides free independent housing and benefits advice from a city centre-based location and also via telephone and outreach sessions.

Disability Information and Advice Service (DIAS)

Provides free, impartial and independent advice services for disabled people. Focus is predominantly on welfare benefits and information and advice relating to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

East Bristol Advice Centre (including Barton Hill Advice Centre)

Provides free and confidential independent advice on welfare benefits, housing, employment, debt and immigration issues for residents of east Bristol via appointments, telephone and outreach sessions. Advice and information.

North Bristol Advice Centre

Provides a free independent information, advice and representation service to people living in North Bristol on welfare benefits, debt, housing and basic employment law issues via appointments, drop-in sessions, outreach and home visits.

Shelter

Provides free, independent housing and homelessness advice and representation service to Bristol residents via drop-in, outreach sessions and telephone advice.

South Bristol Advice Centre

Provides free confidential independent information, advice and representation on welfare benefits, debt, housing and basic employment law issues to residents of South Bristol via appointments, drop-in sessions, outreach and home visits. Also provides NVQ Level 3 Advice and Guidance Training for volunteer advice workers.

St. Paul's Advice Centre

Provides free legal information, advice and representation on welfare benefits, immigration, housing, debt, employment and community care issues to residents of St. Paul's, St. Agnes, St. Werburghs and Easton through appointments, drop-in and outreach sessions and home visits.

10 ORGANISATIONS NOT INCLUDED IN THE 2005 REVIEW OF ADVICE SERVICES**LOCAL AUTHORITY PROVISION**

Not included in the Review of Advice Services

CARE DIRECT

Based within Social Services Department, provides a service to vulnerable adults, older people and their carers. Services include access to social services resources and help to older people applying for benefits.

TRADING STANDARDS SERVICE

Part of Bristol City Council it provides in-depth advice and mediation from one-off telephone calls to complex casework to the public in response to problems with goods and services. It also has an enforcement role regarding trading standards and provides a weekly outreach session at the CAB, members of ACFA and currently training Age Concern staff.

VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS NOT INCLUDED IN THIS REVIEW

There were a number of groups receiving BCC Community Regeneration funding that we decided not to include in review findings.

Only one of these was found to provide advice on social welfare law; **Child Poverty Action Group** – they failed to involve themselves in the review,. Their grant is less than £15,000.

The following groups provide essential and valuable services but their principal role was not the provision of free, legal advice services to the public. These organisations are:

- **Awaz Utoah** – primary activity is to support Asian victims of crime; agency does not provide advice in any areas of social welfare law;
- € **Chinese Women’s Group** – exists to promote and provide cultural activities for the Chinese community and acts as an advocate on behalf of Chinese people in Bristol in their dealings with external agencies, including BCC and the police. The agency confirmed to us that it does not provide social welfare advice, but signposts users to relevant agencies, often accompanying them and providing interpretation.
- € **SARI (Support Against Racial Incidents)** – works with victims of racial harassment. Provides in-depth casework support to victims and advice on remedies open to them. This may include a small amount of advice on securing welfare benefits and housing but only in the context of support on harassment issues. Does not hold any level of LSC Quality Mark.
- € **Next Link Housing Project** – provides support to victims of domestic abuse. Agency informed us that it does not provide advice in any areas of social welfare law.
- € **Refugee Action** – the funding it receives is to facilitate and maintain an inter-agency forum to address refugee issues. Refugee Action (South West) Asylum Advice provides a comprehensive and substantial legal advice service to asylum seekers in the south west. However, this is only available to those seeking asylum and is funded by the Home Office as part of the NASS system.

- € **Bristol Care and Repair** - receives funding from other departments but not Community Regeneration. Provides advice and support to older or disabled people who need repairs or adaptations to their home. 10% of its activity is advice on social welfare law issues but only to those seeking repairs or adaptations to their property.
- € **Off the Record** – young people’s counselling and support service that actively supports those challenging discrimination.
- € **Sikh Resource Centre** – provides cultural support and education activities
- € **Bristol Muslim Cultural Society** – in addition to cultural activities and representing the Muslim community, activities include providing welfare benefits and housing advice.

11 FUNDING FOR BRISTOL ADVICE AGENCIES AT APRIL 2004

	Total Funding	Bristol City Regeneration Dept	Bristol City (Supporting People)	Legal Services Commission	PCT	North Somerset & Bath	South Glouc. CC	CRE	Sure Start	Neighbourhood Renewal	Community at Heart	Shelter	Big Lottery	Charitable trusts	Other
Age Concern	184,000												184,000		2,750
ABLC	426,193	186,299		94,463		8,570	11,304	41,600					67,831	5,000	11,126
Avon Settlement	11,164	3,164													8,000
Bangla. Assoc.	52,478	51,478					1,000								
Brigstowe Project	122,500		120,000			2,000									500
Bristol CAB	230,646	165,348			20,669									36,629	8,000
BDAC	322,915	42,540		120,519			25,000						78,457	22,130	34,269
CHAS	28,776													19,683	9,093
DIAS	105,301	47,661	16,320				24,800						16,520		
EBAC	298,431	18,219									280,212				
NBAC															
Shelter	364,000			93,000			62,000					209,000			
SBAC	127,775	44,231		45,598					18,470				19,476		
St. Paul's	122,540	68,619		50,474											3,447
WRMAS	404,761	332,858	71,903												
Total	3,110,527	1,011,352	208,223	487,042	23,669	10,570	161,221	41,600	41,786	37,747	280,212	209,000	427,828	83,442	89,585