

National Advice Network Wales

Annual Review of the Welsh Government's Information and Advice Action Plan

12 June 2017

Dear Cabinet Secretary

I am delighted to present you with this first Annual Review of the Welsh Government's Information and Advice Action Plan. The review has been conducted by the National Advice Network Wales and notes the progress that has been made since you published your plan in December last year.

The Welsh Government has recognised since the early days of devolution the important role played by advice services in improving the lives of people of Wales. Significant support and substantial resources have been invested in advice services to positive effect as confirmed by independent evaluation.

Following the cuts to legal aid and local authority budgets as part of the Westminster Government's austerity programme you jointly commissioned with Jane Hutt AM a Review of Advice Services in Wales which was published in 2013. Successive Ministers / Cabinet Secretaries have taken forward the recommendations of that review with the National Advice Network Wales (NAN) being tasked by your predecessor, Lesley Griffiths AM, to advise on a more strategic approach to the development of advice services across Wales.

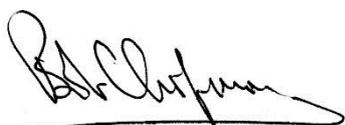
When you took office as the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children last summer NAN proposed a way forward for advice services in Wales. You asked for a practical Action Plan which would deliver improvement with a collaborative approach, NAN and others helped your officials to develop the Action Plan which was published in December 2016. The attached report shows the progress made during this first part year of the Action Plan.

I am pleased to report that good progress has been made in many areas of the Action Plan despite a loss of momentum following publication due to a four-month delay in the recruitment of appropriately experienced staff.

The timetable for the mapping, needs analysis, quality framework, key messages and consolidation of internal funding streams have all slipped as a result but are now making progress and will begin to deliver over the next few months. Other work is ahead of schedule: your officials are in active discussions with a view to aligning advice commissioning processes with the Money Advice Service; NAN has started discussions with Welsh Government officials (1) to include public legal education and work to continue embedding financial education in the development of the new school curriculum, and (2) to include the strategic planning of good quality information and advice services through the work of Public Service Boards and Regional Partnership Boards.

The Information and Advice Action Plan is a five year plan which, as a living document, will be updated each year to reflect progress and emerging priorities. NAN has made some recommendations in the following pages for how it should be updated now and we will do so following each Annual Review. We recognise that it will take ten years to fully develop our shared vision for the advice sector in Wales but we believe that a significant and positive start has been made in this first year of the Action Plan. Members of the National Advice Network are fully committed to this approach and look forward to working with you over the coming year to delivering against this plan and identifying how else the advice sector can contribute to improving the lives of people in Wales and the well-being of future generations.

Yours sincerely



Bob Chapman
Chair - National Advice Network Wales
12 June 2017

National Advice Network- Annual Review of Information & Advice Action Plan

Action	Original Timeline	Progress	Update	Current Timeline	RAG Rating
<p>1. Welsh Government to implement and support the phased introduction of the IAQF Wales for Social Welfare law information and advice providers including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and training for the information and advice sector • Awareness raising for the public, providers and funders 	<p>Gradual rollout of IAQF between April 2017 – March 2020</p>	<p>IAQF in place.</p>	<p>Contractor will be procured to commence the phased implementation of IAQF Wales.</p> <p>During the first phase of the IAQF implementation, current quality standard holders will be supported to be accredited against the IAQF standards and engagement with a range of advice and information providers will be progressed to determine the varying levels of support different providers will require in order attain IAQF accreditation. This will enable best practice models, self-help materials, etc., to be developed to support the wider implementation of the IAQF, during 2018 to 2020.</p> <p>Contractor will develop and implement a Wales wide communication strategy to raise awareness off and promote the IAQF amongst all relevant stakeholders.</p>	30.11.17	
				31.03.18	
				31.03.18	
<p>2. Encouraging other funders of advice services to recognise and adopt IAQF Wales as an assessment and award criteria</p>	<p>Commence 2017/2018</p>	<p>Engagement with Money Advice Service and Big Lottery ongoing.</p>	<p>Welsh Government and the National Advice Network will continue to develop relationships and engagement with all funders, i.e. national organisations, Local Government, etc.</p>	31.12.18	
<p>3. Welsh Government to explore with partners the establishment of a second tier specialist support service for IAQF accredited providers to include, if appropriate:</p>	<p>Commence 2018/2019</p>	<p>Initial discussion held with Money Advice Service regarding their funding of Debt second tier service.</p>	<p>Welsh Government and the National Advice Network recognise the value in the proposal. However, it is not an immediate priority. An options appraisal to determine the model for the 2nd tier service will be undertaken during 2018/19.</p>	31.12.19	

National Advice Network- Annual Review of Information & Advice Action Plan

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPD accredited adviser training offer • Telephone advice on complex cases • Direct representation for test cases • Occasional policy evidence papers 					
4. Welsh Government to explore opportunities to adapt and extend IAQF Wales to cover the broad range of information and advice services.	2019/2020		The Welsh Government and the National Advice Network recognise the potential of the IAQF to be the consistent label demonstrating a provider is delivering a quality advice and information service. However, it is not an immediate priority. it is proposed that during 2018 the Welsh Government and the National Advice Network will engage with the WLGA, and local authorities on the IAQF being adopted to demonstrate the quality of all services involved in the fulfilment of the statutory duty under Social Services legislation to provide 'advice and information'.	31.12.18	
5. Welsh Government to maintain strategic oversight of IAQF Wales	Annual		Regular review by Welsh Government reporting to National Advice Network on progress during 'Core Member' meetings.	31.03.18	
6. Work with/ encourage the development of local/regional networks. Aims: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • build a better client journey by improving referral processes • Single front door • Potentially virtual quality support / buddying • local/regional planning 	2018 onwards	Advice and Information Networks and Supporting People Provider Forums established in parts of Wales.	The National Advice Network to learn from the established Networks to prepare and issue guidance on the role of, and standards for local/regional networks. All relevant national, regional and local networks across Wales. E.g., Financial capability groups; HMCTS user groups; LA welfare reform mitigation/UC implementation partnerships, etc., to be mapped by NAN.	31.03.18	

National Advice Network- Annual Review of Information & Advice Action Plan

<p>9. Improving service user experience by removing barriers and ensuring inclusive engagement of all groups, including minority groups.</p>	<p>2019/20</p>	<p>Widened membership of Extended National Advice Network includes people with relevant experience and knowledge.</p>	<p>The Welsh Government and the National Advice Network will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore options for a co-production approach to service design. • explore links with Valleys Taskforce to empower and engage with local communities – potential pilot to learn best practice. • regularly review membership of NAN 	<p>31.03.20</p>	
<p>10. Work to shift demand over time from crisis help towards prevention Aim: Better informed citizens</p>	<p>2020/21</p>	<p>Initial contacts made with UK charities “Law for Life” and the “Citizenship Foundation”, and with WG Education Department re School Curriculum Reform for 3-16s to include “public legal education”. Positive responses received as the idea as this fits with ‘ethically informed citizens’</p>	<p>Continue work with the Education Department on curriculum reform (31/03/2018) Welsh Government and the National Advice Network to explore how to embed ‘preventative’ work within the provision of ‘crisis’ advice. Propose to develop and commence a pilot on crisis interventions linked to housing or welfare benefits problems.</p>	<p>31.03.18</p>	
<p>11. Welsh Government to encourage information and advice providers to create and maintain their entries on the Dewis portal so that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals can find the help they need • Providers and other 	<p>Map published 2016</p>	<p>Data collection produced an interesting exercise in understanding the sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified issues with parts of sector e.g. FCA registration and 	<p>There is huge positive potential for service users; providers; funders; etc., having ease of access to an interactive map detailing comprehensive and accurate data on advice and information provision across Wales. However, the Project has stalled and the Welsh Government and National Advice Network are engaged in discussions with DEWIS Cymru to implement short term solutions to various concerns over verifying provider information on services provided, partial mapping, etc.</p>	<p>31.10.17</p>	

National Advice Network- Annual Review of Information & Advice Action Plan

<p>stakeholders can make effective referrals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funders and commissioners can see clearly what services are available both locally and nationally to inform service planning. 		<p>indemnity insurance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Definition of 'specialist' misunderstood Concerns that details are already out of date 	<p>Guidance also needs developing for providers on updating/maintaining their data.</p> <p>Longer term solution will lie with Advice Networks to check local provider data and the IAQF will include service provider data being formally verified during the accreditation process.</p>	31.12.18	
<p>12. Welsh Government to publish independent advice needs analysis</p>	<p>April 2017</p>	<p>Publishing of robust needs analysis due in late June 2017 (subject to purdah)</p> <p>Audience – policy maker, funders, service providers</p> <p>Purpose - help inform decisions on how best to meet a range of needs.</p>	<p>Welsh Government and the National Advice Network to appraise and agree options for commissioning additional research into:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> delivery channel preference and impacts, which is not covered in needs analysis. needs of people going before tribunals in Wales. To establish if people need representation or whether preparation of a written case is enough; what sort of information needs to be available; how existing info such as Law for Life's guides could be better used etc. 	31.12.18	
<p>13. National Advice Network to reflect collective evidence based policy concerns to policy makers.</p>	<p>2017/18 – working group to be established</p>	<p>Citizen Advice, Shelter Cymru, Step Change, Local Authorities, et al, have established systems.</p>	<p>The National Advice Network will establish a working group to examine the potential to develop, from the established policy streams, a means to report collective evidence based policy concerns within Wales.</p>	31.03.18	
<p>14. National Advice Network to monitor delivery against the action plan and report to the Cabinet Secretary for Communities & Children.</p>	<p>Annually (April)</p>	<p>Review undertaken at the National Advice Network Extended Membership meeting held on the 27th April.</p>	<p>First annual review to be shared with the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children in June 2017.</p>	22.06.17	

National Advice Network- Annual Review of Information & Advice Action Plan

<p>15. Welsh Government to explore a funding advisory hub to encourage a consistent strategic approach to information and advice funding based on agreed principles which support national and local funders and delivery bodies.</p>	<p>2017/18 – (proposal for hub developed)</p>	<p>Continue to encourage collaborative process at Ministerial level</p>	<p>There is a need to develop a more detailed analysis of the different funding streams from Welsh Government, Welsh Local Authorities and funding bodies linked to the provision of social welfare advice and information service provision in Wales.</p> <p>Welsh Government and the National Advice Network working-group to appraise how inter-funder cooperation can be developed and implemented.</p>	<p>30.06.18 31.12.19</p>	
<p>16. Welsh Government to integrate their funded advice service provision</p>	<p>Phase 1 from April 2018</p>	<p>The Welsh Government is working to develop and implement a better joined-up commissioning process during 2017-18.</p>	<p>Welsh Government to commence the phased transformation of two of its funding streams (Front Line Advice Services Grants and Better Advice Better Living) to create a single coordinated advice fund. Ongoing work will consider other Welsh Government funding streams, which will be taken into account in future work.</p>	<p>30.03.18</p>	
<p>17. Welsh Government and the National Advice Network to encourage other funders and commissioners to adopt the same approach.</p>	<p>2017 - 2021</p>	<p>Potential for joint commissioning process being explored with Money Advice Service.</p>	<p>Welsh Government and the Money Advice Service are committed to greater collaboration around the funding of money/debt advice service provision in Wales. The potential to align commissioning plans is being explored for 2018 with a longer term aim to implement joint commissioning.</p>	<p>31.03.18</p>	
<p>18. Funders and commissioners of information and advice to support a mix of preventative measures and crisis help based on need.</p>	<p>2017-2021</p>		<p>The Welsh Government and the National Advice Network are committed to developing a preventative approach to the ensure households receiving advice are helped to attain a sustained outcome by mitigating the probability of problems occurring in the future.</p>	<p>31..12.21</p>	

National Advice Network- Annual Review of Information & Advice Action Plan

19. National Advice Network to scope further work on potential shared outcome measures.	2017 - 2021		The National Advice Network Wales will manage this long term project. The initial phase of the work will focus upon the mapping of the range of outcomes that funders currently use and identifying newly developed outcomes from social welfare advice interventions that are linked to the well-being goals and ways of working set out in the Wellbeing for Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.	31.12.18	
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Recommendations in the light of progress made (or not made)

The National Advice Network recommends that during the coming year consideration is given to commission new research on channel preference for accessing information and advice, and/or pilots are designed and implemented on how prevention advice can be built into crisis advice.

Priorities for 2017-18

The National Advice Network proposes that the following activities, in the order presented, are priorities for 2017-18:

- Activity 16 (related to funding)
- Activity 17 (related to funding)
- Activity 1 (related to quality framework)
- Activity 8 (related to engaging with PSB's and RPBs)
- Activity 10 (related to embedding preventative advice into crisis help interventions)