

Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

10:00am, Monday 20 January 2020

Advice Services Accreditation

Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 Committee is asked to note the Council's request to be accredited to The Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers.

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Report

Advice Services Accreditation

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report provides an update on the Council's Advice Services preparation for being accredited against The Scottish National Standards (the standards) for Information and Advice Providers. Assessment for accreditation through audit functions are provided by the Scottish Legal Aid Board (SLAB).

3. Background

- 3.1 The standards set out detailed requirements that advice providers are expected to adhere to for housing, welfare rights and money advice services. These Standards have an audit and accreditation process that identifies how providers meet them. These audit functions are provided by the Scottish Legal Aid Board (SLAB).
- 3.2 The Standards cover the quality of advice provided, as well as the ability of an organisation to deliver an advice service.
- 3.3 Advice is defined in 3 types:
- 3.3.1 Type 1 - active information, signposting and explanation,
 - 3.3.2 Type 2 - Casework,
 - 3.3.3 Type 3 - Advocacy, representation and mediation at tribunal or court action level.

4. Main report

- 4.1 The Council's advice services are delivered through the Advice Shop, based at 249 The High Street. This service offers money advice, welfare rights advice and debt advice. It also operates The Advice Line, which provides the facility for people to seek advice via telephone, rather than present at an office.
- 4.2 There is no material consequence related to services not being accredited, however, to evidence and ensure good practice the Council should ensure that it achieves accreditation.

- 4.3 Several voluntary sector advice providers that are funded by the Council and partners are currently accredited.
- 4.4 A full list of accredited agencies can be found at: <https://www.slab.org.uk/advice-agencies/scottish-national-standards-for-information-and-advice-partners/list-of-agencies-already-accredited/>.
- 4.5 The Council has applied to be audited as a provider of type 3 welfare rights and money advice. The Scottish Legal Aid Board has indicated that this audit is likely to take place in Spring 2020, no date has been confirmed yet.
- 4.6 The Council's Advice Services Manager is currently leading on the preparation for the accreditation process. This includes reviewing all procedures and gathering of evidence which will be required to comply with the audit requirements.
- 4.7 The audit process is undertaken in two stages. Firstly, peer reviewers will review examples of case records to assess the quality of advice provided.
- 4.8 If the review finds that advice provision is adequate, then the accreditation moves to the second stage. At this point auditors will request additional evidence, related to process and procedures to ensure that the advice provider meets management standards. This stage will include a site visit by an auditor.
- 4.9 Once these stages have been completed successfully SLAB will recommend accreditation which will be formally approved by the Scottish Government.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Officers will continue to prepare for the upcoming accreditation process.
- 5.2 Once SLAB confirm a date for the accreditation process, Officers will provide updates for Committee through the Business Bulletin.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications from this update report.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 There is no impact on stakeholder or community impact as a result of this report.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 Further details on the accreditation process can be found here: <https://www.slab.org.uk/advice-agencies/scottish-national-standards-for-information-and-advice-partners/>

9. Appendices

9.1 None.