

**Advising, Supporting, Empowering.  
A strategy for the delivery of generalist advice services in Northern Ireland 2015-2020**

**Advice Strategy Consultation questionnaire.**

**Introduction and background**

The Department for Social Development is consulting on a new strategy for the provision of generalist advice services in Northern Ireland. This includes advice on issues like welfare benefits, housing, finance and consumer issues and employment issues.

This survey forms part of the public consultation process on the draft proposals for the new strategy. The survey should be completed in conjunction with the consultation document which sets out the background and detail of the proposals. The consultation document is called '**Advising, Supporting, Empowering' a Strategy for the Delivery of Generalist Advice Services in Northern Ireland 2015-2020**'. It is available in the Consultation Zone on Department for Social Development (DSD) website <http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/consultations.htm>

This consultation will run from 22 September 2014 until 14 December 2014.

DSD have commissioned the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's Analytical Services Unit to collate the consultation responses. All responses will be treated as confidential and no individual or organisation will be identifiable from the responses given.

If you have any queries on this survey please do not hesitate to contact the Analytical Services Unit:

[asu@dsdni.gov.uk](mailto:asu@dsdni.gov.uk)

## About you

### Your details

No individual will be identified in the analysis of responses, however under the Freedom of Information Act anonymised individual responses may be disclosed.

**1. Please provide your details below (\* denotes required text):**

Name: *	<b>Belfast City Council</b>
Address:	<b>City Hall</b>
City/Town: *	<b>Belfast</b>
Post Code:	<b>BT2 8BP</b>
Email Address:	<a href="mailto:Taggartc@belfastcity.gov.uk">Taggartc@belfastcity.gov.uk</a> ; <a href="mailto:mullenc@belfastcity.gov.uk">mullenc@belfastcity.gov.uk</a>
Phone Number:	<b>02890320202</b>

**2. Please tick the box below if you wish your response to be held confidential**

[ ] I wish my response to be confidential

Are you responding as an individual or as a representative on behalf of another group or organisation?

As an individual.

As a representative on behalf of another group or organisation (including charities, advocacy groups, representative bodies and other organisations).

What is the name of the organisation?

Belfast City Council

## The Vision and Values for a new strategy

The background and details behind the priorities and proposals are in section of the consultation document titled “*The Vision and Values for a new strategy*”.

**Question:** To what extent do you agree with the following priorities and proposals?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<b>Priorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That a new Vision for the new strategy be agreed.</li> <li>That underpinning values be agreed.</li> </ul>					
<b>Proposal 1</b>	Vision statement – “To have in place accessible, quality generalist advice services for the people of Northern Ireland”.					
	Strongly Agree	<b>Agree</b>	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<b>Proposal 2</b>	The underpinning values of the Vision are - Impartiality, Accessibility, Confidentiality, Independence, Effectiveness, Accountability, Free to the user.					
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure

**For consideration:** Please provide details of any other components that you feel should be included, in the Vision or underpinning values?

- Some of the values could be made clearer, for example detail what is DSD’s understanding of ‘Effectiveness’.
- Accountability and Independence could be made clearer by emphasising the service is open and transparent.
- In terms of vision and principles, it would be good to see a direct link between accessible, effective advice provision and building emotional resilience and mental health and wellbeing in local communities.
- Perhaps the vision statement should state that advice is to be free, i.e. *‘To have in place free, accessible, quality generalist advice services for the people of Northern Ireland.’*
- When it comes to independence, there must be the perception of independence, especially when political parties are involved in advice provision. This seems to be more of an issue for smaller councils in rural areas rather than Belfast.

## Objective 1: To empower and enable people to help themselves

The background and details behind the priorities and proposals are in the section of the consultation document titled “**Strategic Objective 1: To empower and enable people to help themselves**”.

**Question:** To what extent do you agree with the following priorities and proposals?

Priorities	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide services in a way that empowers and enables people to better manage their own affairs.</li> <li>Increase self service provision and its use.</li> </ul>						
<b>Proposal 3</b>	Generalist advice providers should work to provide people with the skills and confidence to manage their affairs effectively.					
	Strongly Agree	<b>Agree</b>	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<b>Proposal 4</b>	Generalist advice providers should increase self service provision and actively promote its use.					
	Strongly Agree	<b>Agree</b>	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure

**For consideration:** Do these priorities and proposals address the main issues? Responses are especially welcome that offer suggestions about how the proposals might be implemented or that raise issues that have not been covered.

- Self service is probably the preferred method of initial access for the majority of users as information can quickly be accessed any time it is needed, however lack of access, or capacity to access digital self service provision would be a concern for those who do not have internet access, those who are not IT competent, and people who do not speak English.
- The move towards an online service is in keeping with modern society. Online services is a useful tool in helping to empower individuals to help themselves rather than being totally dependent on an advisor.
- Importantly, it also helps to free up appointments for those who really need one to one assistance.
- Whilst self service provision is to be encouraged, we should be mindful of individuals who are not computer literate and those who do not have access to computers or internet access. We also need to ensure facilities are in place for individuals who cannot speak English.
- Consideration could be given to linking advice services to primary care or family support hubs.

## Objective 2: To have an aligned and complementary approach to the delivery of advice services

The background and details behind the priorities and proposals are in the section of the consultation document titled “**Strategic Objective 2: To have an aligned and complementary approach to the delivery of advice services**”.

**Question:** To what extent do you agree with the following priorities and proposals?

<b>Priorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service delivery should be organised to take account of changes arising from the Reform of Local Government.</li> <li>Deliver efficient services, which are aligned, minimising duplication and overlap.</li> </ul>					
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<b>Proposal 5</b>	Funders and advice providers should align, simplify and streamline the present mechanisms to work closer, more collaboratively and minimise duplication.					
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<b>Proposal 6</b>	Promote the use of signposting and referrals to maximise service delivery.					
	Strongly Agree	<b>Agree</b>	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure

**For consideration:** Do these priorities and proposals address the main issues? Responses are especially welcome that offer suggestions about how the proposals might be implemented or that raise issues that have not been covered.

- CAB is a well recognised brand name but brand recognition is lacking when it comes to the independents. Promotion and branding of the independent advice sector is something which Advice NI could do in conjunction with their member groups.
- Joint training between CAB and Independents is an action which should be encouraged and facilitated between advice providers.
- Locally advice providers should consider running “one stop” shop type events. This would ensure alignment, encourage collaborative working on the ground and enhance the opportunity for signposting and referrals to maximise service delivery.

## Objective 3 To have a sustainable Advice Sector which maximises the impact of resources

The background and details behind the priorities and proposals are in the section of the consultation document titled “**Strategic Objective 3: To have a sustainable Advice Sector which maximises the impact of resources**”.

**Question:** To what extent do you agree with the following priorities and proposals?

Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Find new and innovative ways to provide better value for money.</li> <li>Enhance the sustainability of the Advice Sector.</li> </ul>					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<b>Proposal 7</b>	Review organisational structures and create a more efficient delivery model through the sharing or pooling of resources and adoption of common systems.					
	Strongly Agree	<b>Agree</b>	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<b>Proposal 8</b>	Develop new and innovative ways to deliver current services more effectively.					
	Strongly Agree	<b>Agree</b>	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<b>Proposal 9</b>	Explore alternative funding sources and models.					
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<b>Proposal 10</b>	Consider a new model for delivery of representation services.					
	Strongly Agree	<b>Agree</b>	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<b>Proposal 11</b>	Develop opportunities for diversification and income generation.					
	Strongly Agree	<b>Agree</b>	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<b>Proposal 12</b>	Develop services to meet well evidenced need.					
	Strongly Agree	<b>Agree</b>	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure

**For consideration:** Do these priorities and proposals address the main issues? Responses are especially welcome that offer suggestions about how the proposals might be implemented or that raise issues that have not been covered.

- The strategy needs to identify ways of linking advice services to outcomes and outcome indicators for new council community plans to ensure collaboration and a more strategic and joined up approach to the provision of advice services.
- The strategy does not reflect this and refers to a principle of working more collaboratively to ensure efficiency and reduce duplication of services.

## Objective 4: To maximise accessibility to quality generalist advice services

The background and details behind the priorities and proposals are in the section of the consultation document titled “**Strategic Objective 4: To maximise accessibility to quality generalist advice services**”.

**Question:** To what extent do you agree with the following priorities and proposals?

<b>Priorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good quality advice services are available to those who need them.</li> <li>• Services are readily available and easily accessed.</li> <li>• Increase the provision and use of telephony and digital services.</li> </ul>					
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<b>Proposal 13</b>	Introduce an agreed advice quality standard across the Advice Sector					
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<b>Proposal 14</b>	Extend and promote the use of high quality digital and telephone services.					
	Strongly Agree	<b>Agree</b>	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<b>Proposal 15</b>	Provide a full range of services using multiple channels and include face to face services for those who need them most.					
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<b>Proposal 16</b>	Generalist advice providers should have appropriate mechanisms in place to provide advice to people with specific accessibility needs.					
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<b>Proposal 17</b>	Funders of generalist advice services should seek assurance that services meet an agreed quality standard.					
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure

**For consideration:** Do these priorities and proposals address the main issues? Responses are especially welcome that offer suggestions about how the proposals might be implemented or that raise issues that have not been covered.

- In order to maximise accessibility, advice providers should promote web-based resources such as ‘how to’ guides, FAQ pages, pdf information leaflets, etc. There is the need for the advice sector to become more business like to ensure best use of resources. It has been the case that many providers have provided a type of handholding service to clients but the environment is changing and clients now need to be encouraged and supported to help themselves where possible and advisors need to free up their time to deal with individuals with more complex cases and those to require more in-depth support.
- CAB is moving towards Information kiosks in public places (shopping centres, libraries, etc). This is to be encouraged and supported as it is complementary to face-to-face advice provision and encourages more self empowerment on the part of individuals. It is also an excellent way of providing accessible information outside of normal office

hours (weekends, evenings, etc).

- Agree with having Quality Standards in place. Perhaps this should be linked to principles for achieving vision
- The move towards an online service is in keeping with modern society. Online services are a useful tool in helping to empower individuals to help themselves rather than being totally dependent on an advisor.
- Importantly, it also helps to free up appointments for those who really need one to one assistance.
- Whilst self service provision is to be encouraged, we should be mindful of individuals who are not computer literate and those who do not have access to computers or internet access. We also need to ensure facilities are in place for individuals who cannot speak English.
- A move towards a telephony service as the main method of accessing information is being promoted by some providers (eg. CAB). This makes good business sense in an environment of limited resources and increasing demands. It also enables face-to-face appointments to be available for those who need them most. A triage system for people contacting advice providers is to be encouraged as it promotes better business efficiency.



## Objective 5: To encourage the role of the Advice Sector in contributing to the policy development cycle

The background and details behind the priorities and proposals are in the section of the consultation document titled **“Strategic Objective 5: To encourage the role of the Advice Sector in contributing to the policy development cycle”**.

**Question:** To what extent do you agree with the following priorities and proposals?

Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Advice Sector contributes to the policy development cycle, particularly in terms of independent evidence based input.</li> </ul>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
Proposal 18	Policy makers should seek the contribution of the Advice Sector when developing, reviewing or evaluating policies.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
Proposal 19	The Advice Sector should contribute to the formulation, development, review and evaluation of policies and to the evidence base that supports these.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure

**For consideration:** Do these priorities and proposals address the main issues? Responses are especially welcome that offer suggestions about how the proposals might be implemented or that raise issues that have not been covered.

- The Advice Sector should have a role in contributing to policy development as they are the people who see firsthand how governmental policies are working. There is a need for evidence based policy contribution as opposed to anecdotal input. Their input will be invaluable in assisting policymakers to develop policies and procedures which are in keeping with day to day experiences of individuals. The advice sector should be involved at a consultative level in every stage of policy development.

## Objective 6: To support the delivery of the strategy

The background and details behind the priorities and proposals are in the section of the consultation document titled “**Strategic Objective 6: To support the delivery of the strategy**”.

**Question:** To what extent do you agree with the following priorities and proposals?

Priorities	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That consistent training, quality standards and IT systems are in place across the advice network.</li> <li>Develop communications structures to support the changing advice environment.</li> <li>Develop volunteering within the Advice Sector.</li> </ul>						
<b>Proposal 20</b>	Training should be consistent, to a standard that is set out in an advice quality standard and providers should not duplicate or overlap training services.					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<b>Proposal 21</b>	A single IT system (that includes Management Information Statistics) should be encouraged across the advice network to improve consistency, reduce costs and improve support for frontline staff and volunteers.					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<b>Proposal 22</b>	Develop an integrated communications strategy.					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<b>Proposal 23</b>	Retain experienced volunteers, recognise their contribution and develop new volunteering opportunities to help ensure the ongoing involvement of volunteers in advice provision.					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure

**For consideration:** Do these priorities and proposals address the main issues? Responses are especially welcome that offer suggestions about how the proposals might be implemented or that raise issues that have not been covered.

- The responsibility of delivery the strategy should not rest entirely with DSD. There is a case for joined up working between regional and local government as well as NI Advice Service Consortium and reps from frontline advice providers.
- The regional bodies need to work closely with member groups to support them in delivering the various aspects of this strategy. In addition, an Action Plan to accompany the strategy should be developed with key milestones and a realistic timeframe otherwise the strategic objectives could easily ‘slide’. It is also important to acknowledge the different issues of urban and rural areas and, for this reason, the strategy should be able to accommodate both and not be a one size fits all paper.
- The strategy and its implementation should be reviewed on a regular basis, by all stakeholders and, where necessary, steps taken to ameliorate difficulties at an early stage.

- Agree with the need to develop the use of volunteers. Volunteers are one of the biggest resources within the generalist advice sector. It is acknowledged that without volunteers the sector would falter. All volunteers should be adequately trained and supported.
- An audit of volunteer needs would help identify the various needs and measures to be put in place to help support and encourage volunteering in the advice sector.
- Agree that it is in the interests of the Advice Sector to have a single IT and management information system to be able to provide and record robust, evidence based services. This will be particularly important going forward as government and funders will have to give assurance that value for money services are in place. Anecdotal evidence will not be attractive to funders who will want to see evidenced outcomes and impact for any investment. The strategy needs to identify who pays for the implementation of this system. This was also identified as a priority in the last strategy but was not implemented.

## Objective 7: To deliver the strategy

The background and details behind the priorities and proposals are in the section of the consultation document titled “**Strategic Objective 7: To deliver the strategy**”.

**Question:** To what extent do you agree with the following priorities and proposals?

Priorities	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To ensure the strategy and its associated Action Plan are implemented, monitored and evaluated.</li> <li>To ensure strong, effective engagement structures are in place to support delivery.</li> </ul>						
<b>Proposal 24</b>	The strategy will have an Action Plan setting out how the strategy will be implemented and which can be adapted to reflect future needs and priorities.					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<b>Proposal 25</b>	DSD will establish a Steering Group to oversee the implementation of the Action Plan and monitor the strategy’s delivery and evaluation.					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<b>Proposal 26</b>	The cross cutting nature and the need to provide aligned and complementary advice services should also be reflected in the makeup and work of the Steering Group.					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<b>Proposal 27</b>	The implementation of the strategy will be monitored and reported on throughout its lifetime and there will be interim and final evaluation reports with recommendations.					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<b>Proposal 28</b>	Have in place supporting structures to ensure that the cross cutting nature of advice provision is reflected.					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure

**For consideration:** Do these priorities and proposals address the main issues? Responses are especially welcome that offer suggestions about how the proposals might be implemented or that raise issues that have not been covered.

There is agreement that the priorities and proposals presented are required to ensure the strategy is implemented effectively during the period. It is important that the responsibility of delivering the strategy does not rest entirely with DSD. There is a case for joined up working between regional and local government as well as NI Advice Services Consortium and reps from frontline advice providers. The regional bodies need to work closely with member groups to support them in delivering the various aspects of the strategy. In addition, an action plan to accompany the strategy should be developed with key milestones and a realistic timeframe.

It is also important to acknowledge the different issues of urban and rural areas and, for this reason, the strategy should be able to accommodate both and not be a one size fits all papers.

The strategy and its implementation should be reviewed on a regular basis, by all stakeholders and where necessary, steps taken to ameliorate difficulties in delivery at an early stage.

## About the overall strategy

The following questions ask you about the objectives we have set for the strategy and whether you think the priorities and proposals we have set out will achieve the strategy's Vision.

**Question:** To what extent do you agree with the objectives we have set for the new strategy?

<b>Objective 1</b>	To empower and enable people to help themselves					
	Strongly Agree	<b>Agree</b>	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<b>Objective 2</b>	To have an aligned and complementary approach to the delivery of advice services					
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<b>Objective 3</b>	To have a sustainable Advice Sector which maximises the impact of resources					
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<b>Objective 4</b>	To maximise accessibility to quality generalist advice services					
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<b>Objective 5</b>	To encourage the role of the Advice Sector in contributing to the policy development cycle					
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<b>Objective 6</b>	To support the delivery of the strategy					
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure
<b>Objective 7</b>	To deliver the strategy					
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No view /not sure

**Question:** Overall do you think the priorities and proposals we have put forward will be successful in achieving the Vision of having in place accessible, quality generalist advice services for the people of Northern Ireland?

Yes

No

Partially

No view /not sure

**For consideration:** Are there any other objectives that you think the strategy should have and is there anything else we should consider to achieve the Vision?

None