

Funding stream:	Information and Advice
Name of grant:	Information, Advice and Customer Representation
Grant Award:	£547,000 for each financial year for the period 2019/20 to 2022/23 subject to annual budget approval.

Section 1 – Service Overview

We want to grant fund a coordinated 'one-stop shop' service meeting the information, advice and customer representation needs of a range of client groups with differing advice and support needs. We would like to fund a single service through a Lead Provider, with a range of partners making up a consortium arrangement to ensure that the required specialisms and different community needs are met. The specialist, generalist and children's specific information, advice and customer representation service will be available to all of Ealing's residents, prioritising the most vulnerable and in-need.

The service will be expected to maximise self-help and self-reliance; and meet the language, communication and cultural needs of Ealing's diverse communities; be accessible to people with sensory impairments and people who lack capacity - people with learning disabilities, autism, dementia, mental health needs and their carers; as well as older people and people with physical disabilities; and reach people who are socially excluded, isolated or housebound.

We want to fund a service that will: -

- maximise the use of volunteers and 'pro bono support' as a complement to the staff in the operation and running of activities; and offer volunteers appropriate training, supervision and support.
- be available in a variety of ways including web-site, e-mail, telephone, text messages, skype and face to face.
- have a central base and offer a range of outreach sessions in the community in accessible locations, in safe and confidential spaces, as well as home visits, where safe and appropriate.
- operate 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday, however will be flexible and offer appointments at times (during evenings and weekends) and venues suitable to clients as requested and appropriate.
- be available by self-referral, referral by an agency or by referral by friends or family.

Definitions

Information – 'the open and accessible supply of material deemed to be of interest to a particular population. This can either be passively available or actively distributed' (Putting People First)

Advice – diagnosing clients' problems, giving information and explaining options, identifying further action the client can take, offering basic assistance, including assistance in completing claim forms where necessary.

Casework – supporting a client to take action e.g. putting a client's case to a third party in order to move the case on. This may involve getting them to make or to change a decision in the client's favour. It may include a level of negotiation; support the client's case over the telephone, by letter or face to face. A pre-requisite to supporting someone is the need to get their explicit permission to act on their behalf.

Customer Representation – Help a client with interpreting a letter or e-mail; making phone calls or sending correspondence on behalf of a client; writing letters or e-mails with a client; filling in

forms or applications with a client; helping a client lodge a query or complaint; supporting a client whose first language is not English; attending a meeting with a client.

Section 2 – Service Outcomes

Applicants will need to demonstrate how the provision of the services will assist in meeting the following outcomes:

- People in greatest need have better access to information and customer representation services to help them improve their lives
- People in greatest need receive timely, accurate, confidential, quality assured advice, enabling them to better deal with issues/problems towards improving their lives.
- People in greatest need avoid disadvantage because commonly encountered legal problems are identified and prevented
- People remain as independent as possible, or increase their independence; and are able to access information and advice to maintain physical and mental health, and their social and financial wellbeing.
- People are better able to make decisions, navigate the systems, make complaints and take more control over their health and social care provision.
- People are more effectively signposted and referred to and between services.
- People receive their entitlements and are made aware of their obligations
- Prevention of homelessness through housing advice
- Earlier identification and intervention for parents and carers of children with additional needs
- An increase in the number of parents accessing appropriate support for their children
- Parents of children with additional needs better able to care for their child resulting in improved social and emotional well-being for the family.
- A reduction in: -
 - Health inequalities through provision of accessible information and advice
 - Financial exclusion through access to debt advice services,
 - fuel poverty by access to income maximisation services
 - pensioner poverty by provision of benefits advice
 - child poverty

Indirect outcomes include:

- enhanced well-being and reduced stress
- client empowerment
- increased sense of social and financial inclusion

Section 3 – Service Delivery/Activities Sought

Council funding will specifically support the following activities:

A 'one stop shop' for Ealing residents to be able to access free of charge information, advice and customer representation, but targeting the most vulnerable, specifically: -

- adult social care groups in line with the Care Act 2014 requirements
- families with children with additional needs, or disabilities as defined in the Children and Families Act 2014.
- socially excluded and vulnerable people needing support in areas of debt, housing, immigration and welfare benefits

Information and advice areas to include

- General information, legal advice and customer representation on a borough wide basis to cover areas of housing, welfare benefits, health and social care, debt and money

management, employment, consumer protection, family and domestic issues, immigration and nationality

- Information on the range and type of care and support services available to help people remain independent e.g. aids and adaptations, health services, carers' support services, leisure, transport and travel, education and learning.
- Targeted Information and advice to families/parents of children with additional needs, linking in with relevant children's' specialist support services; and support peer and self-advocacy support groups for parents, in line with the SEND reforms.
- Where appropriate, provide casework support free of charge to Ealing residents most in need, and not eligible for Legal Help, or unable to act for themselves and cannot afford a solicitor, prioritising areas of debt, housing, welfare benefits, and immigration and nationality.
- Referral of those eligible for Legal Help and Legal Aid to specialist legal advisers where these services exist.
- Customer Representation targeted at people who experience 'difficulty' in understanding or using information given, and communicating their views; and need help liaising with services and accessing support.

Provision of a forum to bring together all advice services in the borough:

- to share information and discuss strategic local and national issues affecting the advice sector.
- support development and upskilling of the local advice sector, with regard to quality, best practice, keeping abreast of changes/new legislation.
- facilitate training/mentoring and support for smaller/BME community based information and advice providers.
- Develop partnership working with improved referrals and signposting towards encouraging low level information needs and form filling support to be picked up by voluntary and community groups throughout the borough.
- Develop partnership working with relevant SEND children's services and domestic abuse services.

Section 4 – Specific Criteria

The Council will assess:

- Your proposal to deliver accessible information and advice appropriate for its intended audience.
- Your proposed delivery model for assessing and managing demand, including use of triage service, diagnostic interview and referral arrangements.
- How you will address the challenges of an increasingly digital environment.
- Your proposed partnership, networking and support offer to other information and advice services, and to community organisations providing information and advice services as part of their offer.
- How your service will identify and address issues at an early stage to prevent escalation leading to need for more intensive resources.
- Your strategic and business planning to ensure stability and sustainability of the service.

Providers will be required to monitor:

- Number of sessions delivered and method of delivery – appointments, drop-in, telephone, home-visit, outreach etc.
- Number of new clients and number of repeat clients
- Breakdown of type and level of support given
- Number of users taking up services and pattern of take-up across the different advice areas
- Profile of users

Evidence of longer-term benefits of advice given including:

- Details of financial gains for clients – level of new benefits/tax credits claimed, level of debt matters written off etc.
- Details of non- financial outcomes – number of evictions prevented, number of employment matters resolved
- Case studies that demonstrate improved problem solving, improved ability to navigate the system, improved health and wellbeing.

In addition, the applicant will be required to submit with their application the following:

A service delivery plan based on the criteria covering the period 2019/20 - 2022/23 using the template provided.

- A partnership agreement where the application is made by a consortium.
- Details of how information will be communicated effectively and take into account the needs of people (and organisations) accessing the service including needs arising from age, disability, gender, ethnicity, religion and belief, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, sexual orientation, and gender reassignment.
- Details of how you will obtain customer feedback and consult users on improving your service.
- Details of quality assurance measures. Applicants must have the Advice Quality Standards Certificates at Advice with Casework level, the Community Legal Service Quality Mark, and be registered with the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner.
- A child protection policy and procedure. This can either be your own policy and procedure or you can adopt Ealing's child protection policy and procedure for voluntary sector organisations.
- Details of a named Nominated Safeguarding Person.
- A statement outlining the standards that users and stakeholders can expect, including agreed referral protocol.
- Details on promoting volunteering and developing new volunteering opportunities to assist in advice provision.
- Written policies and procedures with regards to the operation of the service including financial management, equal opportunities, and confidentiality guidelines.
- Your complaints procedure.
- Details of promoting services to equality groups.

Section 5 – Monitoring and provision of information

The grant recipient will provide quarterly up-dates to the Council based on sections 1 - 4 above.

Continuation of the grant will be dependent upon meeting the outcomes and delivering the service activities set out above.