

Someone on my side:

The manifesto of the Advice Services Alliance

The importance of advice

In any one year, at least one in three people have a problem relating to legal issues such as housing, domestic violence, benefits, debt and employment. These problems can cause poverty, homelessness, anxiety and other health problems.

This figure is increasing as a result of the recession. There is evidence of a significant increase in the number of enquiries relating in particular to debt, housing and employment problems.

Legal and advice services have an important role in ensuring that people receive the support that they need. This enhances the health of local communities. We work for a society where all people are treated fairly, without discrimination, with equal access to justice.

The Advice Services Alliance calls on the next Government to:

- work with the sector to ensure that people receive the advice and support that they need.
- protect the independence of the advice sector.
- work with the sector in preventing problems from arising in the first place.

The logo for the Advice Services Alliance is located in the bottom right corner. It consists of the words "advice", "services", and "alliance" stacked vertically. "advice" and "alliance" are in a dark blue font, while "services" is in a white font inside a dark blue rectangular box.

Work with the sector to ensure that people receive the advice and support that they need by:

- making advice services accessible to all those who need them. It is important that people are able to obtain advice in a way that suits them best. Whilst telephone services are convenient for many, there is evidence that, for varying reasons, many people need face-to-face provision of advice.
- recognising that one size won't fit all and that advice services need to be tailored to meet the needs of different groups, such as young people, in society.
- fully consulting the sector when major policy developments are taking place. For example, in relation to the personalisation of social care, the Government together with the advice sector have a crucial role in ensuring that older and disabled people have the information and advice they need to make informed choices.
- ensuring that the advice sector is adequately funded. The budget for civil legal aid should be reviewed in the light of the recession.
- encouraging local authorities to support their local advice sector.
- ensuring that funding arrangements are focused on the benefits of advice and enable advice agencies to be responsive to developments such as the recession.

Protect the independence of the advice sector by:

- safeguarding the relationship of trust between users and their advisers by protecting it from external influence.
- recognising the value of the advice sector's social policy role in seeking improved public services.

Work with the sector in preventing problems from arising in the first place by:

- positive engagement with the sector in preventing problems caused by ineffective public services and complex systems of entitlement.
- introducing proper consumer safeguards to better protect vulnerable people.
- supporting a programme of legal education to increase public awareness of the law and assist people to deal with problems before they escalate.

About the Advice Services Alliance

Who we are

The Advice Services Alliance (ASA) is the umbrella body for independent advice networks in the UK. Our members are:

AdviceUK
Age Concern and Help the Aged
Citizens Advice
DIAL UK (part of Scope)
Law Centres Federation
Shelter
Shelter Cymru
Youth Access

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