



Advice Week 2009

www.asauk.org.uk/adviceweek

Feel like you have
a mountain to climb?

Beat your problems:
get advice

When is Advice Week 2009 and why is it important?

Advice Week 2009 will run from 12-18 October. A dedicated national week creates an ideal platform on which to raise the profile of the advice sector: the availability of our services and the difference we make. This helps generate support for our work and also persuades people to trust us to help them.

What's in this resource pack?

This pack contains background information about Advice Week as well as ideas and tips on how to make it a success locally. Nationally we've identified four objectives, which you might like to use your increased profile to work towards during Advice Week. This pack looks at each in turn, suggesting activities that could help you achieve them and providing examples of what others have done.

What's the theme?

The recession is increasing both the number of people experiencing problems and the number of problems they're experiencing. Therefore, the theme of Advice Week this year is 'Get help now before a problem becomes a crisis'.

Who's involved?

Six national networks have again joined together to stage Advice Week. They are:

- Advice Services Alliance
- Advice UK
- Age Concern and Help the Aged
- Citizens Advice
- Law Centres Federation and
- Youth Access.

They are all partners in Promoting Advice – one of eight workstreams that make up Working Together for Advice, a three year project funded by the Big Lottery. For more information visit www.asa.org.uk > Working Together for Advice > Promoting Advice

How will it work nationally?

The six partners will issue a joint press release to national media shortly before Advice Week begins. They will also be championing the need for advice at an MP's pledge day. All MPs will be invited to a drop-in event where they can find out more about:

- how advice agencies are benefiting their constituents
- how they can work with advice agencies
- how best to support them.

How can it work locally?

Free posters to help you tailor your promotion according to your current priorities

You will have already received two A4 posters and one banner poster to help you promote Advice Week generally. However, following your feedback on Advice Week 2008, we recognise that every agency has different priorities depending on its current circumstances. For this reason we have created a variety of different posters that will help you meet your own more specific objectives, whichever they are:

- Objective one – raising awareness of self-help materials
- Objective two – raising awareness of your services amongst groups for whom English is a second language
- Objective three – raising funds
- Objective four – recruiting volunteers

These posters are free, and can be viewed and ordered at www.asauk.org.uk > Working Together for Advice > Advice Week. Each agency can request up to two copies of each version. Please note they are available on a first come first served basis.

Teaming up with other agencies

A straw poll of stakeholders reveals them to believe partnership working is key to efficiency, but is not seen to be undertaken widely enough across the advice sector. With this in mind, we are hoping to see frontline agencies replicate the national partnership work at a local level to promote advice services during Advice Week.

There are many benefits:

- a bigger range of knowledge and skills
- additional capacity to plan and implement activities
- better information sharing
- greater efficiency and value for money
- easier access for service users.

What other resources are available?

You can download short, practical guidance notes on the following subjects from www.asauk.org.uk > Working Together for Advice > Advice Week:

- writing a press release
- organising events
- giving presentations
- engaging groups who speak English as a second language.

Objective one – raising awareness of advice services, in particular self-help materials

We know how busy you are as an advice agency, especially in the current climate. Choosing this objective will allow you to promote your services to those who need them without generating unmanageable demand in the process. You'll be helping those who can, to help themselves, leaving advisers as free as possible to prioritise others who are in the greatest need.

There are lots of self-help materials available for you to use with clients:

- your own network might produce them for members
- they can be found on www.advicenow.org.uk under Advicenow guides on the left hand menu
- your council or other voluntary sector organisations might produce them and would undoubtedly be happy to have your support with disseminating them.

StreetLegal – Homeless? Get Your Foot in the Door

StreetLegal, a specialist legal advice project for young people now based at Islington Law Centre, was commissioned by the Advicenow project to produce an information leaflet, *Homeless? Get Your Foot in the Door...*, for homeless 16-17 year olds to be made available on the Advicenow website. StreetLegal offers help and assistance in housing and homelessness matters, welfare benefit appeals, school exclusions (where there is no parental support), child abuse and employment rights for young people leaving care in North London. The information leaflet provides basic guidance for homeless 16-17 year olds and young people leaving care on the duties placed on local authorities for those young people not able to stay at home. The leaflet promotes the need for young people to get advice on their situation and provides details of a number of telephone help lines specifically working with young people.

For more information go to www.advicenow.org.uk > Advicenow guides > housing > Homeless?Get your foot in the door

There are lots of activities you could consider doing to raise awareness of your advice services and the availability of self-help materials. Here are just a few suggestions:

- Attend a community event to display and distribute self help materials.
- Man a market stall to attract local community members who maybe dismiss the idea of advice services because they don't have time to visit an agency.
- Mention the availability of self help materials (and how to access them) in the notes to editors on any press releases you issue.
- Your local council may have a neighbourhood learning department. If so, ask them to highlight your self help materials.
- Create a display at your local library or shopping centre – basically anywhere you can get permission to do so that attracts plenty of visitors.

Market Stall

Ask your local council if you can take over a market stall for one day. You could conduct simple benefit checks, as well as giving out self-help materials. You'll need volunteers to man the stall, as well as chairs and decent footwear.

If you're going to choose this as your objective for the week, please ensure that you request the poster ASAP, as they are available on a first come, first served basis.

Objective two – raising awareness of advice services among hard to reach groups, specifically those who speak English as a second language

Advice Week is a great platform on which to highlight your services to the general public, but why not tailor it to fit the needs of your local community? Consider the demographics of your area; if there are high numbers of people who have English as a second language, consider having an objective to make sure these groups are aware of your services and feel they are relevant and accessible. Research shows that those who are least likely to access advice are often those who are most in need.

You will need to be mindful of your interpretation policies, though. For example, if your agency cannot supply interpreters, there is a danger you will generate expectations that you can't meet.

Guidance on engaging people who speak English as their second language with the concept of advice has been commissioned through the Working Together for Advice project. It outlines the need and the challenges, and is packed with practical tips for overcoming them. Download the guidance at www.asauk.org.uk > Working Together for Advice > Advice Week from 24 July.

There are lots of activities you could consider doing to engage with typically hard to reach groups. Here are just a few suggestions:

- Give talks to black, Asian and minority ethnic groups to explain the availability and benefits of free, confidential and impartial advice.
- Build links with local interpreters; they'll be able to help spread your messages for you.
- Ask advisers to visit religious buildings, community centres, schools etc. to offer one-off outreach sessions and raise awareness of your services in the process.
- Create displays in the same places to catch people who missed the advice session.

Build links with local interpreters

Lots of local authorities and PCTs have interpretation teams. You could arrange to meet with the manager of these departments to highlight what your agency does and see if you can set up a formal referral process, or even just request informal word of mouth recommendations.

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Objective three – raising funds for your agency

With the economic climate as it is, there is an increased demand for advice and, consequently, an increased demand for funds. One option is to supplement your core funding streams with public donations; it's not only a great way to maximise your income, but also helps to position your agency as a charity, if this is a fact that's often overlooked.

Don't forget, you need to follow guidelines to ensure you don't breach any laws or rules. Before you start any fundraising please check the Institute of Fundraising's website: www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk > best practice > the codes > codes of fundraising practice.

During Advice Week 2008, Rochford and Rayleigh CAB conducted a street collection in the high street, they raised £175.97. Seven volunteers took to the street. 'Although we raised some money to help the bureau, the main benefit was raising awareness of our charity status.' The main interest was actually from people who had used our service in the past and it was good to hear the difference our advice had made.

There are lots of activities you could consider doing to raise funds from within your local community. Here are just a few suggestions:

- Hold sponsored events such as a sponsored walk or silence. Don't forget to ask people to Gift Aid their donation.
- Organise bucket shakes at sports events, railway stations etc., basically anywhere there are lots of people – they often will put their hand in their pocket.
- Hold an auction of promises – ask people to promise to do something that they wouldn't normally, then others bid to see them do it.
- Supermarkets often offer sessions of bag packing to charities; see if they'd let you do it.
- Build links with local businesses to get their employees fundraising for you.

Working with local businesses

You may have been approached by local businesses in recent times to see if you would be able to organise an advice session for their employees. If this happens (and you have enough volunteers or staff to cover it), you could agree to run a session during Advice Week on the proviso that the company holds a fundraising event for your charity, for example a dress down day or a cake sale.

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Objective four – recruiting volunteers for your charity

Volunteers are very important to the advice sector as a whole, and it's quite possible that you couldn't deliver all of your services without them. If this is the case, Advice Week is a great opportunity to thank your existing volunteers and publicise their great work to recruit more.

The most common reason people don't volunteer is that they weren't asked. So ask! Take the time to think about who it is you want to ask, though – maybe you want to recruit more diverse volunteers so your staff are more representative of your local community.

The key is showing the benefits to potential volunteers – what's in it for them? Here are just some of the benefits you might mention to potential volunteers to persuade them to get involved:

- experience the rewards of contributing to an important cause
- make new friends
- increase your confidence by meeting new challenges successfully
- gain valuable work experience
- stay involved with work during a period of unemployment
- keep active through retirement.

It's also important to challenge perceptions. People might assume they could only volunteer as an adviser, so make sure you illustrate the whole range of available roles, from receptionists, to fundraisers, to trustees and media managers. As well as selling the benefits and challenging perceptions, be aware that you may need to dispel fears about not being adequately qualified, for example, or not receiving support to settle into the role. Part and parcel of dispelling fears is staying in close contact with your potential volunteers... make them feel wanted and make them feel secure.

There are lots of activities you could consider doing to recruit new volunteers. Here are just a few suggestions:

- Hold an open evening at your agency where potential volunteers can chat with existing ones.
- Give talks to university/ college students looking to gain work experience.
- Give talks to Parent Teacher Associations to reach parents thinking about returning to work.
- Register your opportunities with your local Volunteer Centre.
- Create a tailored window display.
- Run a profile piece of an existing volunteer in the local paper.
- Ask your current volunteers to put the word out amongst their family and friends.

Word of mouth

The most effective way of recruiting volunteers is through existing staff, supporters, volunteers, trustees and clients. Ensure, therefore, that everyone knows the recruitment process, for example which roles are available, how to get an application pack, what training and support is available, and so on. Do bear in mind, though, that relying on word of mouth means you are likely to attract similar people, which can affect the diversity of your staff.

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