

Developing the New Quality Mark

Work With Advice Plus Partnerships – Update March 2010



Introduction

In late 2009 the New Quality Mark (NQM) Project realised that approximately 50 Big Lottery funded Advice Plus projects were starting delivery with dedicated objectives to improve the quality of advice within their partnerships. Many of these projects included developing and delivering quality assurance schemes. To prevent duplication between these two Lottery funded streams and to ensure Advice Plus projects were informed about the work of the NQM, the project delivered 5 workshops to Advice Plus agencies at a range of dedicated events organised by the Big Lottery and Citizens Advice in late 2009. These events updated participants on the work of the project and advised them on ways their partnership could get involved. Since then the Project has been inundated with requests for support from Advice Plus Partnerships and has responded as follows.

Initiatives between December 2009 and March 2010

In December 2009 the Project Co-ordinator worked closely with Bradford Advice Network and Training Partnership to understand what the needs of Advice Plus Networks were and how best to address them. A range of responses were developed and promoted with the support of the Citizens Advice, Public Direct - Project Manager. Our approach has been significantly governed by the lack of dedicated funding within our project to respond to external support demands during this stage of its life. When originally conceived neither WTFA or Advice Plus identified that this natural crossover between the two projects would develop. To enable an appropriate level of support to be developed beyond October 2010, the NQM will seek to include support to Advice Plus organisations in any future funding bids.

Activities Provided:

Provision of assessment and audit materials - In January 2009 the project made all its external draft materials available to Advice Plus Partnerships. These include draft introductory materials, standards, auditor and assessor manuals, report formats, tools to help agencies prepare for assessment and tools used by NQM assessors and auditors during the project's pilot phase. To date the quality leads of 34 Advice Plus partnerships have requested this material. We have agreed that partnerships can use the material in any way they want with the provisos that:

- the material is badged at all time, is clearly marked as DRAFT and is not altered
- Advice Plus partnerships agree to give us feedback on the materials.

In return we will provide partnerships with updates of our materials as they evolve. A list of Advice Plus Partnerships accessing material is available at the end of this update.

Training Courses and Information Materials Initial work with the Bradford Partnership quickly highlighted that Advice Plus Partnerships needed:

- access to information about the NQM project to “sell” the benefits to their members

- access to training in order to use the materials effectively.

Partnerships were particularly interested in the NQM Quality of Advice Assessments as these went to the heart of their own objectives to improve quality. They wanted to use the material in a range of ways including:

- Training members so they were ready for an “friendly” assessment by a external assessor
- Training members so they were ready for an “friendly” assessment by another partner in the project. This included peer assessment and assessment by a dedicated worker officer employed by the partnership
- Training members so that they were able to deliver self assessment to an acceptable standard for their own organisations

In response to this demand the NQM project has developed a 1-day training course for Advice Plus members on Quality of Advice Assessment. The course is running in Leeds, Birmingham and London during March. Each partnership has been offered two places, one of which we asked be taken by their quality lead. To date 21 partnerships have booked onto the courses with a total of 34 participants. An additional three partnerships have not been able to attend for various reasons. The project is considering providing an additional course in London during late spring. The course focuses on enabling participants to use the materials in a developmental rather than compliance context. It seeks to enable participants to:

- familiarise themselves with the new Quality Standards, guidance documents and assessment tools
- practise conducting assessments and begin to develop a consistent approach to quality of advice assessment
- benefit from the findings of the pilot phase and from the expertise of WTFA’s quality assessors

Courses will be taught by a NQM staff member and an assessor who delivered our 2009 pilots. Each participant will also be given a CD rom of all training material and tutor notes, PowerPoint presentations and information bulletins about the project and project evaluation summaries which they can use to support their work

Tailored Support Services To provide the ongoing tailored support requested by some Advice Plus Partnerships the NQM project has partnered with two of its pilot assessors who work on a freelance basis. These assessors continue to work on the project on an ongoing basis and can provide tailored support packages on a charge able basis. Whilst their work remains independent of the NQM project we have a close working relationship with them and are pleased to name them as our preferred suppliers of these activities. Hopefully the project will be in a position to take this support in house after October 2010.

For More Information please contact

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NQM Support Activities to Advice Plus Organisations - Winter 2010. Continued

Partnerships Accessing Draft Materials
Advice Barnet Project
Advice Hub - Cambridge
Advice Strategy Project - Brighton and Hove
Age Concern Bexley
Blackpool Advice Partnership
Bradford Advice Plus partnership
BRANCAB
Bristol Advice Plus Partnership
Cambridge & District Citizens Advice Bureau
Channel CLASP
Cheshire Advice Partnership
Cumbria Advice Network
Hampshire Advice Plus Partnership
Kensington and Chelsea Advice Plus Partnership
Luton Advice Network
Manchester Advice Plus Partnership
Middlesbrough Access to Advice Partnership
Norfolk Community Law Service
North East Derbyshire CAB
Northants Advice Plus Project
Nottinghamshire Advice Network
Plymouth CAB
Rochdale Legal Advice Partnership
Rotherham Advice Partnership
Shropshire CLASP
Somerset Advice Network
South West London Advice Plus Project
Southwark Legal Advice Network
Springfield Law Centre
Sunderland Advice Partnership
Trafford Advice Partnership
Wiltshire Advice Partnership

Partnerships Attending March Training	Places
Advice Hub - Cambridge	2
Advice in Rotherham	4
Advice Leeds	1
Advice Partnership for East Kent (APEK)	2
Advice Strategy Project - Brighton and Hove	1
Bexley Advice Plus Partnership	2
Blackpool Advice Plus	2
Bradford Advice Network and Training Partnership	1
BRANCAB	2
Bristol Advice Plus Partnership	1
Cheshire Advice Partnership	2
Kensington and Chelsea	2
Luton Advice Network	1
Manchester Advice Plus Partnership	2
Norfolk Community Centre	2
North East Derbyshire CAB / Advice Derbyshire	1
Nottinghamshire Advice Network	2
Trafford Advice Partnership	1
Somerset Advice Network	1
Southwark Legal Advice Network	1
SW London Advice Plus	1