

# BHT Legal Services

Pilot Preferred Supplier - The  
experience and thoughts for the  
future

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# History of BHT Legal Services

- 1981 Brighton Housing Advice Centre opened
- 1989 appointed first solicitor
- 1991 opened Eastbourne Office
- 1995 Immigration Legal Service started in Brighton
- 2004 Pilot Preferred Supplier status granted
- 2006 5,857 new cases opened, 31 workers in FTE,  
£1.3m LSC income (both solicitor and Not for Profit contracts)



# BHT Legal Services – what are we?

## BHT Advice

17 Staff in FTE (solicitors, advisers and admin)

Legal advice in housing, debt & welfare benefits

Court duty

Accommodation finding

## Immigration Legal Service

7.4 staff in FTE (solicitors, advisers and secretaries)

Legal Advice in immigration and asylum

## Eastbourne Housing Aid and Legal Services

6.2 Staff in FTE (advisers and admin)

Legal advice in housing, debt & welfare benefits

Court duty

Accommodation finding



# Caseworker benefits of Pilot Preferred Supplier

- Power to grant legal aid certificates in housing
- Less form filling
- Faster decision making
- More responsive (and sensible) decisions on costs limits for immigration
- More “equal” discussion over merits of borderline decisions
- Lawyers feel their expertise is better recognised and respected by LSC officials

# Peer Review



- Much more incisive and outcome focussed measure of quality
- Accuracy of legal advice assessed
- Emphasis on linkages with other areas of law/aspects of case
- Led to review of our approach to casework supervision and increase standards
- Expert feedback provided boost to caseworkers who obtained “excellent”.

# Organisational benefits of Pilot Preferred Supplier

- Relationship Manager
- Priority response for advice
- No more Contract Compliance Audits!
- Flexibility on contract levels and new contracts
- Developed “trust” encourages openness on our management issues and confidence in LSC response

# Points for discussion in future –changing the relationship

- Sophisticated approach to commissioning needed
- Balancing competition/partnership is challenge in other sectors e.g. Supporting People. Audit Commission discourage over reliance on tendering. SP evolved provider forums/dialogue. Care not to damage provider market.
- How can LSC use relationship management to strengthen supplier base and therefore overall quality and accessibility of advice?

# Points for discussion in future –changing the relationship

- Over last 2 years huge policy changes means less decision making at regional level – how should relation managers be empowered and decision making be devolved?
- How can relationship management add value ?
- Can LSC increase its understanding and advice to providers at business/management level and assist business development?
- Brokerage with other stakeholders to help lever in other funding to advice
- Brokerage of appropriate CLAC/CLAN model for area