



## Advice Link Network Terms of reference - revised February 2013

### Introduction

The Advice Link Network is a partnership of local advice providers including public, statutory, not for profit and private organisations.

The aim of the Network is: -

***'To maximise the provision of consistent, comprehensive, quality advice and legal information to enable individuals to fully access their opportunities, rights and entitlements.'***

Advice and Legal information is defined as any advice and legal information relating to residents rights and responsibilities; including referring people to providers of advice and help

The Advice Link Network will cover people using services within Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde.

### Intended Outcomes

- Decreasing deprivation and increasing social and financial inclusion
- Promoting opportunity and independence for all
- Developing empowerment of service users through education and awareness raising
- Developing front line workers through education and awareness raising
- Sustainability of the Advice Link Network

### Objectives

The Advice Link Network will achieve its aim by: -

- Promoting accessible advice by organising events and campaigns
- Promoting and increasing the take up of benefits, employment and services in order to maximise the income of those most in need
- Providing a forum for discussion for advice/legal information providers and dissemination of information on partners' own and other services and rights.
- Promoting quality of advice and sharing of good practice
- Exercising responsible influence on social policy through feedback on local need and provision to the Community Advice Strategy Group, local strategic groups and partnerships, Funders and Partners.
- Recognising the strengths of diversity and the importance and value of all sectors.

- Working with all sectors to promote effective partnership working through shared principles and guidelines such as the Compact\*.

### **Membership**

- Membership will be free of charge and open to all advice or legal information providers from all sectors operating within Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde.
- Members will encourage representation from all advice sectors,
- Membership will be administered by the Advice Link Team
- Members will be willing to take part in the Network referral system.
- Members are expected to show commitment to the Network and be willing to work to an appropriate quality standard relevant to their organisation.
- Members are expected to promote effective partnership working.
- Membership benefits provided funding permits through the Advice Link team include :
  - a central information hub on welfare benefit and advice issues
  - production and distribution of advice tools and publicity
  - 4 network meetings including one advisers' conference per year;
  - network newsletters / alerts
  - basic and specialist level training
  - coordination and delivery of specific Network activities
- Membership benefits may be withdrawn if members behave in ways that are not in accordance with these terms of reference and not conducive to the effective working of the Network. Such a decision will be taken by majority decision at the next available Network meeting.

### **Frequency of Meetings**

- Representatives from member organisations will be invited to attend at least quarterly meetings: two of which will take the form of conferences.
- There is scope for increased representation from member organisations and representation from non-member organisations at the twice-yearly conferences.
- One of the conferences will involve a review of business development including review of the Terms of Reference of the Network and the election of the Chair for the Network.
- From time to time task focused working groups may be formed in which members and non members will be invited to participate.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

- The Network is responsible for devising and developing activities for the year to complement and support its aims and objectives
- Member organisations will be expected to disseminate information to appropriate people at their respective organisations.
- The Network will elect a Chair each year. Members will be encouraged to rotate the Chairmanship.

- The Advice Link Team will service the meetings.
- The Network will be responsible for collation and dissemination of information to inform the work of the Community Advice Strategy Group and key local strategic groups and partnerships.

### **Decisions**

- The Network may make decisions on priorities for:
  - advice tools and access publicity
  - agenda and programme for meetings including the advisers' conference
  - basic and specialist level training topics
  - delivery of specific Network activities / advice events
- Network decisions will be made by a simple majority of organisations present.
- The Chair of any given meeting will have the casting vote at the meeting.

### **Consultation and Publicity**

- The Advice Link Team will maintain a mailing list of information and advice providers and other interested parties and provide regular updates on the work of the Network;
- Network Members will be consulted annually on the progress and development of the Network.
- Members are encouraged to promote the Network, supported by a newsletter.

### **Monitoring Arrangements**

- The Network will review its aims, priorities and progress to meet these each year.

### **Status of these terms**

- The Network will review these terms annually.

***Last revised February 2013***

### **Links and references:**

\*[The Compact](#) (PDF 286KB) is the agreement between the government and the third sector (independent voluntary organisations, charities, community groups, etc.) which outlines a way of working that improves their relationship for mutual advantage. It is also accompanied with an [Accountability and Transparency Guide](#) (PDF 208KB), which outlines steps to take at national and local level, including dispute resolution, internal complaints procedures and ombudsmen functions. <http://www.compactvoice.org.uk/about-compact>