

INTRODUCTION

1.1 About the bureau

The aims of the bureau are :-

The Citizens Advice service provides free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. It values diversity, promotes equality and challenges discrimination.

The service aims:

- To provide the advice people need for the problems they face
- To improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives.

1.2 Services provided

Services are free, confidential, independent and impartial. They are offered to all, regardless of their means, race, colour, ethnic or national origins, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, age or religion.

The bureau provides a generalist advice service which is open to the public at the following times:

Monday	9.00- 4.00
Tuesday	9.00 – 4.00
Wednesday	9.00 – 4.00
Thursday	9.00 – 4.00
Friday	9.00 – 1.00
Saturday	CLOSED

PLEASE SEE SERVICE DETAILS BOOKLET FOR DETAILS OF ALL OTHER SERVICE (in the appendix)

1.2 Services provided

Telephone advice is available during the following times:

Monday	10.30 – 3.30
Tuesday	10.30 – 3.30
Wednesday	CLOSED
Thursday	CLOSED
Friday	CLOSED
Saturday	CLOSED

INTRODUCTION

1.3 The business and development planning process

As required by the Citizens Advice Membership Scheme, the Trustee Board produces a three year Business and Development Plan. From April 2003 it will include a risk management strategy, which is being developed by The Trustee Board. Progress against the plan is reviewed quarterly in the light of financial information. The plan is reviewed annually.

1.4 About the Office Manual

The Office Manual aims to provide a basic guide to the bureau's practices and procedures as they apply to LSC funded contract work.

There are copies in each the department and it is also available via public share.

1.5 Updating the Office Manual

The Office Manual is updated to reflect changes in practice or systems. Anyone who wants to make a suggestion about changing a procedure should discuss it with their Manager or raise it at a staff meeting. If there are any problems with the operation of any procedures, the Quality Representative (see section 2.5) must be informed she will make an appropriate response. The Director of Operations will review the Manual annually to ensure that it reflects current practice and meets the needs of the bureau.

Each section of the Manual is dated. Any re-issued pages or sections of the Manual must be authorised by the Quality Manager. Each copy of the Manual must be updated and the Manual Amendment Record (Amen1) at the back of each copy must be completed to show that it has been done.

1.6 Designation of LSC contract work - this procedure covers:

The method used by the bureau to identify the additional work funded by the Legal Services Commission.

1.7 Background

The bureau has a contract that funds one caseworker in debt two and half caseworkers in welfare benefits and two and half caseworkers in housing.

Each department has a dedicated supervisor as follows: Housing – Carol Moores, Debt – Anne Hawkins and Welfare Benefits – Tahra Javed.

1.8 Characteristics of the model:

In designing the system to allocate work to the these specialists, the following principles have been applied:

1. The client profile suggests that most clients requiring specialist advice will be eligible for Legal Help.
2. Clients who qualify for Legal Help will be referred to the workers who are funded by the Legal Services Commission.
3. Clients who do not qualify for Legal Help will be referred to the generalist service/projects if possible.
4. Workloads will be monitored to ensure equitable distribution between workers.

1.9 Access to the unit's services:

Most clients are referred to the specialist from the two bureaux, although some cases are taken on following direct access.

All cases will be subject to SQM procedures; but cases will only count against the contract in respect of clients who qualify for Legal Help.

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

2.1 Constitution

The bureau is a charity - registration number 519868. It is incorporated and the company number is 2165003

The Articles of Association are kept in the Chief Executives office.

2.2 Management Structure - roles and responsibilities

The bureau is managed by its Trustee Board which is drawn from the local community. The members are charity trustees who have legal responsibility for the general control and management of the bureau, including financial management and control. The bureau's financial position is reviewed quarterly by the finance sub committee who report back to the full committee.

The Trustee Board is responsible for ensuring that the bureau complies with the Citizens Advice Membership Scheme, charity legislation and company law . As a registered charity, the bureau service has to disclose any material transaction, contract or other arrangement with 'connected persons'. Transactions involving trustees personally, directly or indirectly (through family or business connections) are material transactions. When a trustee or anyone connected with a trustee receives any remuneration from the bureau service (directly or indirectly via another organisation) this must be disclosed in the Notes to the Annual Accounts. Accordingly, trustees complete a Register of Interests Form when they join the Trustee Board (see appendix) The information is also used to ensure that the bureau does not find itself in a conflict of interest with a client or potential client

The trustees delegate day-to-day management to the Senior Managers.

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

2.3 Family Tree

Please see Appendix

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MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

2.4 The Trustee Board

Name:	Details - <i>e.g. elected/co-opted/representing an organisation</i>
Chair Carl Cover	
Treasurer: Paula Boshall	
Trustees: Abdul Rashid Richard Soothill Sally Lawton Yvonne Lee Richard Roberts	Elected Member Elected Member Elected Member Elected Member Co-opted Member
Company Secretary: Jonathan Yates	

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MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

2.4.1 Sub-committee(s)

There are two sub-committees. They are Finance Sub Committee and Human Resources Sub Committee.. Each has terms of reference which are kept by the Chief Executive.

Name of sub-committee: Finance Sub Committee
Responsible for: Overall Financial Stewardship of the company

Membership

Name:	Details - e.g. Bureau Manager, Chair of management committee, staff representative
Carl Cover	Chair
Jonathan Yates	Chief Executive
Sharon Beaumont	Finance Manager
Paula Boshell	Treasurer

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2.4.2

Name of sub-committee: Human Resources Sub Committee
Responsible for: Overall responsibility for Human Resource issues

Membership

Name:	Details - e.g. Bureau Manager, Chair of management committee, staff representative
Carl Cover	Chair
Jonathan Yates	Chief Executive
Maria Cuschera	Human Resources Manager
Yvonne Lee	Elected Member

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MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

2.5 Management structure and staffing in the bureau

Job title	Name of postholder
Chief Executive	Jonathan Yates
Director of Operations	Julie Rider
Finance Manager	Sharon Beaumont
Quality Manager	Julie Rider
Training/Human Resources Manager	Maria Cuschera
Bureau Services Manager	Linda Browne
Bureau Manager	Steve Blairs
I.T Manager	Simon Lake
LSC Caseworkers	Tahra Javed (W/B Supervisor) Huma Matlub (W/B) Saira Sadiq (W/B) Carol Moores (Housing Supervisor) Ryan Wharmby (Housing) David O'Glaza (Housing) Anne Hawkins (Debt Supervisor) Huma Khalid (Welfare Benefits)
Paid advisers (Full time)	Christine Whitehead (FIF) Anne-Marie Sheehey (Ward Visitor) Wayne Needham (G.P & Age Concern) Saima Shezadi (G.P & Age Concern) Harvey Budworth (MacMillan) Steve Lawton (MacMillan) Mike Coltman (FIF)
Paid advisers (Part time)	Stephen Logan (OHIP) Paul Horseman (Stroke Service)
Support Staff	Michelle Musgrave (Housing) Georgina Watt (Finance)
Volunteer Development	Dave Marks
Trainee Solicitor	Robina Munir Nadeem

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MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

Volunteer advisers	Please See Appendix
Administration staff – paid	Cherry Cottam (Supervisor) Linda Kelly Sumreen Koussar Neegat Akhtar
Advice Session Supervisor Receptionist	Beryl Sinfield Irene Taylor

PERSONNEL • *Recruitment and Selection*

3.1 Recruitment and selection - this procedure covers:

The steps that will be followed when recruiting paid staff.

3.1.1 The recruitment panel

As soon as possible after it is decided to undertake a recruitment exercise, a decision will be made on the membership of the recruitment panel. The members of the panel will then take part in each stage of the process. Exactly who is on the panel will depend on the nature of the post; but will normally include the person managing the post and a representative of the Trustee Board. At least one member of the panel will, if possible, have undertaken training in recruitment and selection using an equal opportunities policy.

3.1.2 Job descriptions

Every post will have a job description, which is produced by the recruitment panel having analysed the requirements of the post. Other staff in the bureau may be encouraged to comment on a draft. The job description will be written in simple language, identifying each different aspect of the post and including any special features such as evening work, need to travel etc.

The job description must include:

- a title which simply but accurately describes the nature of the work
- who the person is responsible to
- a summary of the duties and responsibilities of the post.

3.1.3 Person specifications

The panel will produce a person specification, which is a list of those skills and abilities which will be required by the person doing the job. The person specification will be used when preparing advertisements, drawing up a shortlist, and choosing the best person for the job. The panel will ensure that they do not draft the person specification in ways which could create unnecessary barriers for applicants or perpetuate patterns of discrimination.

The requirements in the person specification must be:

- as specific as possible
- directly related to the job
- reasonable

PERSONNEL • *Recruitment and Selection*

3.1.4 Advertising

The recruitment panel will consider the most appropriate method used to advertise any job and will give serious consideration to taking positive steps to encourage applications for people who are currently under-represented in the service. Such steps may include identifying publications, newsletters and other information networks that will reach its target groups: black and ethnic minority press, community centres, women's interest group newspapers, disability action groups, gay and lesbian groups etc.

The information provided in any advertisement will include: the name of organisation, title of the post, salary and/or other benefits, outline of duties and requirements, method of application, closing date, interview date, and equal opportunities statement which confirms that the bureau will not discriminate on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origins, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, disability or religion in the selection or treatment of staff.

3.1.5 Responding to enquiries

The panel will ensure that someone will be ready to deal with requests for information as soon as possible after the recruitment exercise has been publicised.

The recruitment pack to be sent to candidates will include: the application form, the aims, principles and activities of the Association and the bureau, the job description, the person specification, a summary of the terms and conditions of employment, details of access for disabled people, interview date/s, the equal opportunities policy statement and monitoring form, and arrangements for paying attendance expenses.

3.1.6 Dealing with applications

All applications will be treated as confidential by the members of the recruitment panel. Applicants will be kept informed of any significant changes in the recruitment schedule.

Applications will be monitored so that the Trustee Board can assess how well the advertising is reaching all parts of the community. The total number of enquiries will be compared with the number of applications received to establish whether the advertisement was effective in encouraging applicants to enter the recruitment process.

3.1.7 Selecting a shortlist

The recruitment panel will assess each candidate's ability to meet the essential requirements of the job as set out in the person specification using a simple scoring system. The panel will keep a record of the reasons for not shortlisting any candidate.

PERSONNEL • *Recruitment and Selection*

3.1.8 Planning the interview day

The panel will decide whether a practical task directly related to the requirements of the job is required to inform its assessment of a person's suitability in addition to an interview.

A realistic timetable will be agreed to allow sufficient time for each candidate to complete any task in addition to the interview. The timetable will also allow sufficient time after each interview for each member of the panel to complete his/her notes on the candidate.

The panel will convene in good time to finalise the procedure they will follow. One of the panel members will act as chair.

3.1.9 The interview/assessment procedure

The aim of the interview is to get candidates talking, to encourage them to provide facts and information, to describe past events or experiences and express feelings or opinions. A general question may be used as a starting point but more specific follow-up questions should then focus on those matters of interest to the panel.

The chair is responsible for:

- welcoming the candidate
- introducing the panel
- ensuring that the interview starts and concludes on time
- ensuring that all questions are relevant to the essential requirements of the person specification and that all aspects are covered
- ensuring that the candidate is aware of the rate of pay, the expenses and other items, conditions attached to the job
- ensuring that the candidate has a chance to ask questions
- ensuring that the candidate is told how the decision will be notified.

3.1.10 Making the decision

At the end of each interview, the panel will be given time to complete their interview notes, using a simple scoring system to establish how well each candidate meets the essential requirements of the job. The panel will discuss the results of this assessment before making any comparison of candidates with each other.

The interview notes (or a summary) will be added to the monitoring form. The notes and forms are kept for at least 12 months.

Once a selection decision has been taken the person selected will be informed, the offer confirmed in writing, and references taken up if necessary. Unsuccessful candidates will also be informed and given an opportunity to receive feedback on their performance.

PERSONNEL • *Recruitment and Selection*

3.1.11 References

The post will normally be offered 'subject to satisfactory references'. References are used to provide comments on a candidate's ability and to vouch for the integrity of the individual. If a reference raises questions about the candidate's ability or character then these aspects should be pursued.

3.1.12 Contracts of employment

In respect of paid posts, the Trustee Board will provide an appropriate contract of employment which takes account of the legal duties upon it as an employer and Citizens Advice policies, including the equal opportunities policy.

3.1.13 Volunteers

The CAB service is committed to the principle of volunteering. Recruiting volunteers is different from recruiting paid staff. The recruitment process for paid staff is intended to **exclude** all but the best candidate; the recruitment process for volunteers is intended to **include** all who meet a set of minimum requirements.

The process of recruiting volunteers must be clearly distinct from the process of recruiting paid staff.

PERSONNEL • *Induction of New Staff*

3.2 Induction of new staff - this procedure covers:

Activities designed to introduce and integrate new workers into the bureau and ensure that they become familiar with its practices and procedures as quickly as possible.

3.2.1 The first day:

On the morning a new worker joins the bureau he or she will be welcomed by the Manager or another member of staff who has been given this responsibility. The new worker will be shown round the office premises and introduced to the other members of the team.

3.2.2 The induction period:

As it is difficult to assimilate a great deal of new information in a short space of time, the following may be spread over several days or weeks. The new worker will be given a copy of the Office Manual, and his or her attention will be drawn to the procedures which are particularly relevant to his/her job. In particular:

- Administrative arrangements
- Aims and principles (if new to the CAB service)
- Answering the telephone/taking messages
- Background information about the bureau and development
- Complaints
- Disbursements procedure (if doing LSC contract work)
- Equalities policies and the existence of national and local equal opportunities groups
- Filing system
- Holidays
- Health & safety
- Hours of attendance
- Management structure and personnel procedures
- Case recording procedures (as appropriate)
- Sickness reporting
- Signposting and referral
- Stationery
- Salary/expenses payments (as appropriate)
- Security arrangements
- Supervision arrangements
- Time recording procedure (if doing LSC contract work)
- Training

3.2.3 Induction checklist

An induction checklist will be completed and subsequently retained on the individual's personnel file.

PERSONNEL • *Staffing and Equal Opportunities*

3.3 Staffing and equal opportunities - this procedure covers:

The equal opportunities policy statement and aims in relation to staffing issues.

3.3.1 Statement of policy

The Trustee Board accepts that in society groups of individuals are discriminated against on grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion, disability, age, sex, being gay or lesbian or marital status. The bureau therefore undertakes to take positive steps to redress discrimination and to achieve equality of opportunity.

The bureau recognises the statutory requirements laid down in the Race Relations Act, the Sex Discrimination Act and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. It accepts and wishes to comply with the recommendations set out in the 1984 Commission for Racial Equality Code of Practice, the 1985 Equal Opportunities Commission Code of Practice, and the Code of Good Practice on the Employment of Disabled People. The bureau welcomes and supports the first positive legislative reference to lesbians and gay men contained in the European Commission's Code of Practice on Sexual Harassment 1991. The bureau will comply with Citizens Advice policies in relation to equal opportunities.

This policy applies to all potential and actual staff, paid staff and volunteers and will be made known to all staff and applicants for jobs.

3.3.2 Aims of the policy

That no applicant, employee or volunteer receives less favourable treatment than another on the grounds as set out in paragraph 3.3.1 above, whether in relation to selection, or subsequently.

That no job applicant, employee or volunteer is placed at a disadvantage by requirements or conditions which have a disproportionately adverse effect on any group listed above, which cannot be shown to be justifiable on other grounds.

3.3.3 Dignity at work policy

The Trustee Board supports the Citizens Advice Dignity at Work policy and will take appropriate action if the equal opportunities policy is breached by any member of paid or volunteer staff.

PERSONNEL ● *Training*

3.4 Training –

This procedure covers:

The training policy of the bureau; the procedure for planning to meet training needs; training records. It also identifies key training resources.

3.4.1 Training policy

The bureau is committed to ensure that:

- all staff receive training which is appropriate to their role and stage of development
- all staff offering advice must complete the Basic Training Programme
- advisers attend at least six training events each year
- all management committee members receive training which is appropriate to their role and stage of development
- training resources are used to maximum effectiveness.

3.4.2 Planning

An annual Bureau Training Plan is produced by the Training Manager. The plan is kept in the Training Managers Office. Training Plans for individuals will be considered as part of annual appraisal and feed into the overall bureau Training Plan.

3.4.3 Training records

Each member of staff has a training record which is kept The Training Manager will ensure that the record is completed to show training undertaken, including the date of courses, course title, duration, and course provider (or states that the training was in-house)The training records are available on Oldham public share.

3.4.4 Key resources - people

Training Manager - responsibility for identifying resources to meet training needs, authorises attendance on courses

Volunteer Development Officer - responsibility for supporting advice workers through the Competences Programme

Business Management Consultant - may be involved in organising courses regionally or locally to support development initiatives - e.g. LSC contracting

Training Management Consultant – provides support and guidance to bureaux on all local aspects of training courses, accreditation of prior learning, appointing new tutors etc.

PERSONNEL ● *Training*

3.4.5 Other key resources

Citizens Advice Management Training Calendar Course Booklet
Training Manuals available from Regional Office
Regional Training Calendar
Citizens Advice information system
Local information
Reference books / Journals
Leaflets
Checklists

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PERSONNEL ● Appraisal

3.5 Appraisal - this procedure covers:

The way that work activities can be evaluated by comparing job or role profiles and competences with actual performance. This procedure identifies the participants and sets out the timetable.

3.5.1 An Appraisal is:

An opportunity to recognise achievement and development potential by:

- identifying skills, both apparent and latent
- acknowledging successful performance
- assessing the effectiveness of knowledge gained and training undertaken
- discovering interests to build on.

An opportunity to identify areas needing improvement by:

- clarifying misunderstandings
- looking at problems in performance
- looking at changes in the job/role and anticipating future changes.

An examination of issues that the participants wish to control or to alter:

- attitudes - so that they can manage them effectively
- skills - to give a basis on which to train and develop the potential the individual has
- qualities - of the person as a worker, their attitudes to clients and staff, to stimulate growth, confidence and motivation
- knowledge – to ensure that it meets the needs of the job/role.

The aim is to focus attention on the individuals in order to encourage self awareness, development and growth for the benefit of the bureau, its clients and the worker. The objectives are for the workers to be aware of their achievement and the potential to develop. The method is an interview between two people with a mutual interest, which is the bureau and the clients it serves.

3.5.2 The Objectives of the Interview

to improve present performance

through two way discussion and the structured analysis of problem areas

to identify potential and offer new challenges for workers

through discussion and analysis

to improve communication

by providing an opportunity and time for discussion between the two individuals involved, which would otherwise be unlikely to take place due to the day to day running of the bureau

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PERSONNEL ● Appraisal

to create or review a training and development plan

through the consideration of the competences required for the individual's role, changes in law and practice, exploration of any problem areas in worker's performance and discussion with workers about their individual potential to identify training needs

to improve motivation

through providing opportunity for assessment of the work being undertaken with the bureau and through recognition of commitment and effort

to provide formal records of the Appraisal

which can be compared annually

to promote effective relationships

through providing a forum for a dialogue to take place and the setting up of a mechanism for positive change

to identify emotional/stress problems

through providing opportunity for an open and confidential discussion in a supportive environment

3.5.3 Who has Appraisals?

All members of paid staff. The procedure set out below may be amended for people who spend few hours a week in the bureau where a less formal structure may be appropriate, as long as the objectives set out in bold above, are covered.

3.5.4 Who carries out Appraisals?

Usually a employees line manger will carry out annual appraisals. This task however can be delegated when appropriate. The Chief Executive carries out appraisals for the Senior Managers, Bureau Services Manager, Service Manager, and the Training and Human Resources Manager.

3.5.5 Appraisal – Timetables

Each member of staff has an Appraisal every twelve months, usually with a review of progress towards objectives after six months.

A mutually convenient time will be agreed with sufficient notice for both parties to prepare. The post holder will be given a copy of the Appraisal Preparation Form two weeks before the interview so that s/he has time to think about and complete it. The Appraisal Checklist can be used to remind the parties of important issues.

An Appraisal interview is likely to last between 45 - 60 minutes, although substantially longer may be needed for full time or senior posts. The precise timing will be flexible to meet individual needs.

After the Appraisal interview, a copy of the Appraisal Record Form and an updated Record of Training Needs and Training Completed will be given to the post holder within a week.

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PERSONNEL ● Appraisal

3.5.6 Confidentiality

No copy is kept of the Appraisal Preparation Form, which is completed solely to facilitate discussion.

The Appraisal Record Form is confidential to the post holder and the other person carrying out the review. Completed forms are kept in personnel files.

Details of the discussion during the Appraisal are kept confidential although some aspects of the discussion may be shared with other members of the bureau team, for example when they are involved in achieving the post holder's objectives. Auditors from the Legal Services Commission or Citizens Advice will want to verify the existence of records and check that objectives have been agreed and that training needs have been considered.

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PERSONNEL ● Appraisal

3.5.7 What to bring to an Appraisal interview

1. Appraisal Preparation Form
2. The post holder's job description or role profile, any competences applicable
3. The Appraisal Record Form from the previous appraisal (unless this is the first)
4. Summary of independent file review records (if working on LSC contracts or doing casework)

3.5.8 The Appraisal interview

The two parties will consider the Appraisal Preparation Form and the job description or role profile and any competences that are appropriate. Any significant changes in role should be discussed, and the job description or role profile amended if necessary.

They will discuss the individual's performance against the tasks and objectives previously agreed. (Unless this is the first Appraisal.)

At the end of the Appraisal the two parties will agree tasks and objectives for the next 12 months. They will remember that more than 5 objectives are usually unrealistic!

A record of the review of performance and the new tasks and objectives will be made by the person carrying out the Appraisal Interview, on an Appraisal Record Form. This will be given to the individual within a week so that it can be agreed.

If agreed, the individual will sign the form, keep a copy for his or her own reference, and give the original back to the person who carried out the review.

If the contents of the Appraisal Record Form cannot be agreed by the individual, the issue should be raised with the line manager of the person who completed the Form.

COMPLAINTS

4.1 Complaints - this procedure covers:

The complaints process for clients about the CAB service in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This procedure will be amended re-issued as and when the process is revised.

4.2 Definition of Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by the client of a bureau about the service s/he received from the bureau

4.2.1 When the complaints procedure may not be appropriate

Some complaints to a bureau concerning the quality of advice may lead to a professional indemnity claim. In this case the matter should be referred to ADS, our brokers, who will liaise with the Insurers. Failure to comply with this might invalidate bureau insurance. Complaints procedures should not be allowed to proceed concurrently with an indemnity claim on the same issue. If, during the process of investigating a complaint, legal action is started against a bureau the complaints procedure should cease. It is undesirable to have two investigations on the same issue occurring at the same time

This process is only concerned with clients expressing dissatisfaction about services from a bureau.

4.3 Overview of Complaints Process

Under the Membership Scheme, the standards and requirements for Complaints and Suggestions are set out under Quality Area 4.9. This includes compliance with the Complaints Procedure.

4.3.1 Information about complaints

The bureau will display complaints posters and leaflets (including LSC complaints leaflets) in the bureau. It will also make clear the name of the person to whom complaints should be addressed and who has overall responsibility for making sure that complaints are resolved.

COMPLAINTS

4.3.2 Complaints file

The bureau keeps a file on complaints received.

4.3.3 Monitoring and Trustee Board review

Monitoring is undertaken using the complaints monitoring form. The information from these forms is collated and reviewed by the bureau as part of its annual review of complaints.

The Trustee Board reviews complaints and suggestions annually in order to analyse performance and strategy in the light of the results of complaints. Action taken arising from the outcome of complaints is considered and a review about whether other measures need to be taken to correct unsatisfactory procedures is part of the process.

4.4 Complaints procedure

In most circumstances, complaints can be dealt with effectively by front line staff who can deal with and resolve the matters raised face to face with the individual concerned. Where a complaint cannot be resolved in this way, the following procedure should be used. Once received, the staff member needs to decide whether the complaint is a minor issue or should be dealt with under the complaints procedure. The consideration and outcome should be recorded, and a complaints leaflet offered to the client. The complaints procedure for the CAB Service has four stages.

The Director of Operations is currently responsible for dealing with complaints.

FEEDBACK ● *Clients' views on services*

4.5 Clients' views on services - this procedure covers:

Steps to be taken to obtain feedback from clients and use the information in the planning and development of services.

4.5.1 When to use this procedure:

This procedure applies when the bureau receives any comments from clients about the services provided (complaints are dealt with under a separate procedure). It also applies when bureaux encourage clients to provide feedback from clients about the services they provide.

4.5.2 What to do when a comment is received from a client:

When any member of bureau staff receives a comment from a client about the service provided or the way the service was perceived by the client, the information should be passed to the Director of Operations.

Examples of feedback include 'Thank you' letters, comments about access to the bureau, waiting times, telephone access etc. If the feedback is not provided in writing, it should be recorded in writing.

4.5.3 Encouraging suggestions from clients:

As is good practice, the bureau encourages clients to make suggestions and consults them on proposed changes in methods of service delivery.

4.5.4 Using the information

Client feedback and comments are considered as part of the review of the Business and Development Plan.

The Director of Operations is currently responsible for feedback.

CASE MANAGEMENT • *Conflict of Interest*

5.1 Conflict of interest - this procedure covers:

The policy adopted by the bureau in relation to conflict of interest, and the procedure adopted to ensure that it is avoided.

5.1.1 Policy

The bureau has a duty to provide advice that is in the best interest of the client at all times. If the bureau could not give the best, most impartial advice possible to a client because it was influenced (or seen to be influenced) by the interest of another party, it would be a problem of conflict of interest.

Conflicts of interest are very unlikely to arise when giving information and advice to clients. They begin to be likely where an adviser is starting to act for a client, that is where the adviser takes up the case and acts on the client's behalf. In this case, the bureau must not advise the other party to a dispute.

Where the bureau is assisting in a less adversarial way, and with the clients' prior agreement, it may be possible to provide information to both sides of a dispute. If an adviser is unsure whether such activity is appropriate he or she will discuss the issue with the bureau manager or their line manager.

5.1.2 Procedure to avoid conflict of interest - outset of the case

There are some cases where a conflict of interest in relation to the other party cannot arise because the bureau will not be advising that party, for example in welfare benefits cases where the other party is the Benefits Agency or in immigration cases where the other party is the Home Office.

If it is clear from initial information that the bureau could not find itself advising two parties in dispute, no further check needs to be made..

In all other cases, before the bureau starts to act for a client, the name check procedure must be followed.

The most common situations in which a conflict of interest could arise are where:-

- The interests of two or more clients of the bureau conflict
- The interests of the bureau, an adviser, or a Trustee Board member could conflict with those of a client
- The adviser or other member of staff knows that the client's case is based on false information

5.1.3 Name check - stage 1

The advice worker must find out who the other parties may be in relation to the client's enquiry, and whether there could be any conflict between them on this matter.

CASE MANAGEMENT • *Conflict of Interest*

For example, in a debt case, a debt may be in joint names; but one party may deny liability. In this situation, the bureau could not advise both parties. There is no need to check the name of the finance company; but the name of the other party must be checked.

In all case where a conflict of interest check is carried out, the Client Information Records in the file will be completed to show the date that the conflict check was carried out.

The client will be asked whether he/she knows whether the other party has taken advice on the matter. If so, the adviser must establish whether the client has received any letters from the other party's adviser. If these letters show that the other party is being advised by another bureau, advice agency or firm of solicitors, no further check need be carried out.

Unless it is clear that no conflict exists by this stage, the advice worker must continue through stage 2.

5.1.4 Name check stage 2 - using CASE

All enquiries are entered onto CASE. The adviser must check to see whether the other party's name has already been recorded by running a search. If so, the case record must be checked to establish whether the bureau is already advising the other party in relation to the matter. If so, see 5.1.6 Dealing with conflict of interest.

5.1.5 Dealing with conflict of interest

The adviser must discuss the matter with bureau manager or their line manager and obtain guidance on the best course of action. The adviser may inform the first party of the position where it is agreed to be appropriate. All decisions are fully recorded on the relevant case sheet(s).

The problem of a conflict of interest will be explained to the second party who must then be referred to another bureau or agency for appropriate help. In some situations, where there is no alternative source of advice, the bureau may be able to advise both parties. Guidance must be obtained from the bureau manager /their line manager before this course of action is adopted.

A conflict of interest in this case over-rides the usual rule of confidentiality, insofar as the second party can be told of the fact that the first has visited the bureau, although no information can be given about the content of interviews.

5.1.6 Conflict during a case

When the bureau discovers that, unknowingly, it has been advising both parties or when conflict arises between parties after the case has begun it will ideally cease to act in the matter. However, if there is absolutely no alternative source of advice the bureau may advise both parties in exceptional circumstances.

CASE MANAGEMENT • *Conflict of Interest*

If such a situation seems to arise the adviser will discuss the matter with bureau manager/their line manager and obtain guidance on the best course of action. Further advice should be obtained from BMCL.

CASE MANAGEMENT • *Opening a New File*

5.2 Opening a new file - this procedure covers:

The administrative steps used in opening a file.

5.2.1 When to open a file:

A file must be opened for every new case on which a client approaches the bureau, where it is clear that the client will receive more than brief 'one-off' information or advice.

A case is defined as work carried out in dealing with the client's problem, or problems if they are linked. For example, if the client has a multiple debt problem which includes credit card debts, water charges arrears and a repossession action, it counts as one case.

5.2.2 Registering a file: using CASE (this assumes that a client record has already been created)

When a legal help case is opened the adviser will start a new enquiry on the client record. They will ensure that all details on the Legal Help screen are completed.

The bureau case reference number is allocated by CASE. The adviser must complete a Legal Help Form issued by the Legal Services Commission and write in the case reference number at the bottom right hand corner.

The Legal Help Form is kept in the paper case file.

5.2.3 Submitting Matter Start Forms and Consolidated Matter Report Forms (CMRFs) to the Legal Services Commission

Consolidated Matter Report Forms (CMRFs) are submitted to the Legal Services Commission at the end of every month.

CASE MANAGEMENT • *Outset of a Case*

5.3 Outset of a case - this procedure covers:

The steps to be taken at the outset of a client's case to ensure that the adviser understands what the client wants and that the client understands what the adviser will do and what he or she can expect from the bureau.

The adviser will abide by the confidentiality policy and guidance of Citizens Advice at all times.

5.3.1 Recording requirements:

The adviser will always discuss, record and offer the client written confirmation of the following:

- details of the client's problem and what the client would like the bureau to do
- advice to the client on the basis of the information available
- the name and status (e.g. adviser, caseworker, supervisor etc) of the person advising the client
- that the service is free
- key dates, especially limitation dates
- the adviser must ensure that the client receives information about the complaints procedure.

Where an adviser is acting for the client, he or she will consider whether it is appropriate to carry out a conflict of interest check. The adviser will obtain the client's consent to record information as required by the Data Protection Act 1998 and act on his/her behalf (see client consent forms).

The adviser will ensure the client is provided with the following information and that it is recorded and confirmed in writing:

- what action the adviser will be taking to deal with the case; in particular, what the next step is
- what action (if any) the client has to take
- the timescales involved in the case; in particular when the adviser is next likely to contact the client
- information about costs the client might have to pay, for example the costs of a hearing requesting time to pay in a debt case

CASE MANAGEMENT • *Outset of a Case*

5.3.2 Legal Help eligibility and the Sufficient Benefit Test

The adviser must check whether the client qualifies for advice and assistance under the Legal Help scheme, and if so, whether the client consents to allow LSC staff access to his/her file. If the client does not consent to LSC staff having access to the file, it cannot be counted as contract work.

The adviser must also consider whether the client's case meets the 'Sufficient Benefit Test' (NfP General Civil Contract Rule 3.3 – 'Legal Help may only be provided to the client, having regard to the circumstances of the matter, including the personal circumstances of the client, to justify work or further work being carried out.'). If the client does meet the test then this will be recorded on the file. If the client does not meet the Sufficient Benefit Test the case cannot be dealt with under the contract.

The adviser must identify a stage at which it would be appropriate to apply to sufficient benefit test again. This might be after a certain number of hours work, or the next stage in the case. This will be recorded on the file.

CASE MANAGEMENT • *Case Administration*

5.4 Case administration - this procedure covers:

The administrative steps to be taken during a client's case.

5.4.1 Maintenance of records

Case files and case recording are kept according to consistent methods so that a file can be read and understood by someone who has not been involved with the case. The key features of case records are:

The Client Information Form (or CASE client screen for CASE users) provides a summary of essential information about the client's circumstances.

Case sheets (or CASE enquiry screen) are used to record all essential details:-

- the facts of the enquiry, including relevant dates (see key dates procedure at 5.5.3), personal and financial details
- the range of problems identified
- information sources used, noting sources
- copies of any calculations made
- contact with any third parties, including name, telephone number and other relevant details, where possible
- alternative possibilities and options explored, including social policy issues
- decisions made about what action will be taken, how, by whom and when
- details of outstanding action. A key word in relation to outstanding action must be written in the right hand margin of the case sheet. This must be crossed through when the outstanding action is completed so that it is clear that it has been done.
- any issues left for future visits. A list of issues to be addressed at the client's next visit must be made at the end of the entry on the case record.

Case sheets are kept together most recent at the top. They are secured together using a treasury tag.

Any other file which is relevant, for example a previous file for the same client, will be linked, for example attached with a rubber band, or there will be a cross-reference to it.

Correspondence - copies of any letters/faxes sent or drafted are kept, as are all letters/faxes received. They are secured together in date order using a *treasury tag*.

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CASE MANAGEMENT • *Case Administration*

Other documents - such as appeal papers are kept together in the file.

Large case files - where there are too many case sheets correspondence and documents to fit comfortably into one card pocket file, a second file (and subsequent files) will be opened.

5.4.2 Reference numbers

The bureau case reference number and the client's matter number are used as 'Our reference' on all correspondence relating to the case.

If there are any items which could become detached from the client's file and where it would be difficult to identify the case file to which they belong, for example photographs, the item is marked with the client's full name and/or reference. If the item cannot be marked, it is placed in an envelope or plastic wallet which is then to be marked as above.

5.4.3 Time recording - Computer system

Time recording is carried out by each caseworker.

5.4.4 Use of checklists

The adviser is responsible for ensuring that any checklist relevant to the case is completed at each stage.

CASE MANAGEMENT • *Time limits - Key dates - Diary Systems*

5.5 Time limits; Key dates and Diary systems - this procedure covers:

- a definition of key dates
- details of the diary system which enables the bureau to ensure that deadlines are not missed.

5.5.1 Time limits - warning

Advisers must remember that there are many time limits for all kinds of claims, applications, appeals and steps in proceedings; far too many to list here.

Deadlines are often strict, and the consequences of missing them can be serious. Advisers need to be aware that many problems clients have will carry time limits, and if they do not know what those are, be prepared to look them up.

Time limits usually run from the date of an event or a decision, and it may not always be clear what that is. Advisers must think carefully about what event or decision the client wants to take action about when calculating deadlines.

Advisers should assume that the appeal or application will have to arrive inside the deadline and should allow at least two days for first class post to arrive.

If the client is able to take action him or herself, the adviser should advise the client what the deadline is, and how to take the necessary action within that deadline. A note of the advice given must be made, including the key date identified.

If the case needs to be referred to a solicitor or other agency, the adviser must ensure that the referral is made in sufficient time to enable the agency to take the necessary action within the deadline. A note of the advice given and action taken must be made.

5.5.2 Key dates

Key dates are those which are important in progressing the client's case. Key dates are those which arise from the case itself, such as the time limits as illustrated above, and also any date which the advice worker considers to be important, such as the receipt of a reply to a letter.

The following must be treated as key dates:

- expiry of a limitation period
- time limits for reviews or appeals
- all hearing dates.

CASE MANAGEMENT • *Time limits - Key dates - Diary Systems*

5.5.3 What to do about key dates

- Clients will be informed about any key dates which affect them
- Key dates are entered into:
 - the key dates section of the Client Information Form
 - the central bureau diary (unless a review of the Sufficient Benefit Test)

If the key date is a limitation date, the date is entered three days before the actual expiry of the limitation to enable action to be taken in time.

[*Example; the last date by which an IT1 can be submitted in Mr. Ahmed's case is 13.12.96 - A diary entry must be made on the page for 10.12.96 as follows: Ahmed, R - deadline for submission of IT1 - 13.12.96 - Advice worker - M.Brown*]

- When an activity required has been completed, the person who has carried it out will tick off and initial the entry to show it has been done.

5.5.4 Checking that action has been taken by key dates

The Bureau Manager is responsible for checking the central bureau diary every day. If a key date has been entered and not signed off to show that the appropriate activity has been completed, he or she must ensure that the required activity is carried out.

CASE MANAGEMENT ● *Progress of the Case*

5.6 Progress of the case - keeping the client informed - this procedure covers:

The steps to be taken during a client's case to ensure that the client understands what the bureau is doing and what he or she can expect to happen.

5.6.1 Limitations in acting for a client

If it seems that there will be limitations on the work which can be done for the client he or she must be advised as quickly as possible. For example; the bureau does not have the resources to represent the client at a tribunal hearing and it is not certain that an effective referral can be made.

5.6.2 Progress and change during the case

Advisers will ensure that the client's case is progressed effectively. Cases will be monitored and unless it is agreed that a case is 'on hold', some activity will take place at least every three months, if only to check that there is nothing outstanding.

Clients will be kept fully informed about the progress of the case at appropriate intervals. They will be sent copies of all letters sent and received which are significant in progressing the case. However, it may not be necessary to send the client a copy of an acknowledgement letter.

Clients must be informed of any changed circumstances that will, or are likely to, affect the overall amount of costs, the degree of risk involved or the cost benefit to the client of continuing the case. For example in a debt case, the client may consider that obtaining limited further time to pay may not be worth the additional costs of a hearing. Advisers should advise the client of the likely costs which would be awarded and alternative options which may be available.

The following are examples of stages at which it is essential to communicate with the client:

- before next steps in the case
- if there are any changes in the planned action in the case
- if the caseworker is changed (in which the client must be told the reason)
- if there is a lack of progress in the case (at least every six months)
- after any Court or Tribunal hearings.

CASE MANAGEMENT ● *Progress of the Case*

5.6.3 Case Plans

A client must always be given information to enable them to know what to expect. In most cases this is achieved through letters and telephone calls. In complex cases the advice worker may find it useful to work out a formal case-plan and agree it with the client. The case plan should cover the main stages of the case, the expected timetable, any reasonably foreseeable costs the client may have to pay. It must be filed in a prominent place in the file and regularly reviewed and updated.

CASE MANAGEMENT • *The end of a Case*

5.7 The end of the case - keeping the client informed - this procedure covers:

The steps to be taken at the end of a client's case to ensure that the client understands the outcome of the case, what if anything may need to be done in the future, and what will happen to the case file.

5.7.1 When to close a case:

Cases are closed when:

- The bureau has completed its work for the client and the case is finished
- The bureau has completed its work for the client and the case has been transferred to another agency / solicitor's firm
- The client has not been in contact with the bureau for three months (unless the matter is on hold because the adviser is waiting for a third party to act), and it appears that he or she does not want to take the matter further.

5.7.2 Contacting a client before closing a case:

The adviser needs information or consent from the client before taking further steps in a case. If the client is asked to contact the bureau and fails to do so, the adviser in consultation with his/her supervisor if necessary, will decide when it is appropriate to send the client a copy of the standard closing case letter.

5.7.3 Informing a client about the outcome:

The adviser must:

- inform/confirm to the client in writing the outcome of the case and inform the client about the arrangements for storage / retrieval of files
- inform/confirm to the client in writing concerning any further action he or she should take either immediately or following some future event
- account to the client for any money (for example; a payment from a charity; a compensation payment from a former employer)
- return any original documents which may have been held by the bureau during the case.

CASE MANAGEMENT • *The end of the Case - Administration*

5.8 The end of the case - administration - this procedure covers:

The administrative steps to be taken when a case is closed to ensure that all relevant administrative issues have been completed and that the file is put into storage for the correct period of time.

5.8.1 Weeding individual files

When a case is closed the caseworker should check the file and ensure that it runs in chronological order. If necessary, the correspondence, case notes, and documents should be secured in separate bundles within the file and duplicates destroyed.

5.8.2 Submitting Consolidated Matter Report Forms:

Closed matters must be reported to the LSC within 3 months of the date on which they end (see 5.7.1). The Consolidated Matter Report Form must be returned to the specified LSC regional office within 7 days of the end of the relevant month.

5.8.3 How long to keep a file:

The Latent Damage Act 1986 determines the limitation period in which a claim for negligence can be brought. The Act was originally introduced to deal with building disputes but it is clearly established that it also applies to other claims in negligence, including the provision of negligent advice.

If a bureau has been negligent but a client does not discover this until after the 6 years have passed, he or she has a further 3 years in which to bring a claim. This is subject to a long stop of 15 years in that, irrespective of the client's knowledge, proceedings for negligence have to be started within 15 years of the last date on which any negligent act or omission occurred.

The following 'high risk' documents must be stored for at least sixteen years after the final entry:

- any case that has been subject to a complaint, insurance claim or other dispute
(‘other dispute’ refers to the bureau's handling of the case)
- any case relating to building works or surveyors' reports on the purchase of property or relating to property
- any case which is considered to be substantial, where the sums of money involved are, for example, in excess of £10,000 or where the advice given was especially complex or where the case is an unusual one

CASE MANAGEMENT • *The end of the Case - Administration*

This list is not intended to be definitive and is merely an indication of the types of cases which may pose the greatest risk, at the closed case check the supervisor should consider whether, for example there is potential for a complaint brought at a later date, or whether the advice sought and given was particular complex.

The supervisor decides whether the file is 'high risk' and should be kept for sixteen years or whether it is not considered 'high risk' and needs only to be kept for seven years.

SERVICES OF OTHER PROFESSIONALS • *When to use*

6. Services of other professionals - this procedure covers:

Steps to be taken when working with another individual or agency on a client's case, including: Doctors, Interpreters, Translators, Surveyors, Solicitors, Barristers or other experts.

6.1 When to use this procedure:

This procedure applies when the adviser needs to use additional professional services from an individual or agency outside the bureau in progressing the client's case, and the adviser makes the decision about who to use.

It applies whether or not the bureau pays for those services. If the bureau is asked to pay a fee, the adviser should also consider the disbursements procedure.

If the adviser uses external professional services; but does not make a choice, the procedure does not apply. (For example; the adviser needs a report from the client's General Practitioner/Consultant, or the client brings a friend/relative to act as an interpreter.)

If the case is referred on to another agency or firm of solicitors and the bureau is no longer involved with it, the referral procedure applies.

6.1.1 Other Professionals

Each department is aware of professionals they can call on.

These professionals meet the requirements of the bureau in terms of expertise, speed of response, flexibility, value for money and service. Advisers instruct only those approved by the bureau except in exceptional circumstances.

6.1.2 Deciding who to use:

Advisers must not discriminate on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origins, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, age or religion. Any breach of this policy will be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure. In selecting someone from the approved section they should consider who is most appropriate in relation to the following criteria:

- the area of law or expertise involved
- equal opportunities
- the complexity of the issues
- speed of response required
- future requirements for example; will the interpreter be available on a subsequent occasion
- whether the supplier holds a LSC Quality Mark (if applicable).

6.1.3 Giving instructions

SERVICES OF OTHER PROFESSIONALS • *When to use*

When giving instructions advisers will ensure that the appropriate amount of information and supporting documentation is given.

Instructions are normally given in writing and include the following:

- the client's name
- relevant background information and any relevant documents attached
- specific issues in the case and any facts relevant to those issues
- the actual points on which advice/reports are required, steps to be taken or documents drafted
- timescale
- arrangements for the payment of fees.

If it is not possible to give written instructions, for example if an interpreter is needed in an emergency, verbal instructions must be confirmed in writing as soon as possible.

6.1.4 Discussion with the client:

Before instructing another professional the adviser must explain what he or she intends to do and seek the client's views if this is appropriate. (For example; a female client may prefer a female interpreter) or explain why a particular individual is likely to be the best choice.

The client will be advised of the following:

- the name of the person selected and status (*e.g. Interpreter, Barrister*)
- what the person is being asked to do and how long they might take to respond

6.1.5 Checking opinions and reports:

All advice, opinions, reports etc. must be checked to ensure that the requirements set out in the instructions have been met. If any clarification or explanation is required, it must be obtained.

SERVICES OF OTHER PROFESSIONALS • *Disbursements*

6.2 Services of other professionals – disbursements - this procedure covers:

Steps to be taken when the bureau needs to use the services of another individual or agency (sub-contractor) on a client's case when:

- a fee will be charged
- the case falls into a contract category
- the client is eligible for Legal Help and has given consent for the Legal Services Commission to audit the file.

6.2.1 Authorisation - internal:

Individual caseworkers made decisions on disbursements for their cases.

When a disbursement exceeds the bureau's Individual Disbursement Limit (usually set at £250) the Legal Service Commission's Application for Prior Authority for Disbursements Form must be signed by the supervisor and a record of the authorisation must be made on the case sheet

The supervisor will monitor to ensure the total value of disbursements incurred without prior authority from the Legal Services Commission under the schedule does not exceed the schedule disbursement limit (usually £1,000.00 including VAT)

6.2.2 Obtain estimates from sub-contractors

Any sub-contractor must be advised that payment will be made after:

- the estimate has been approved by the Legal Services Commission (only necessary if the bureau is unsure about the correct market price)
- the work has been carried out and an invoice submitted to the bureau.

6.2.3 Obtain authorisation from the Legal Services Commission:

Authorisation should normally be made by submitting the Legal Services Commission's Application for Prior Authority for Disbursement Form (see paragraph 6.2.4).

6.2.4 Submit the form to the Legal Services Commission:

If the disbursement is over the individual disbursement limit or would bring the total under the schedule over its limit the original Application for Prior Authority for Disbursements Form should be submitted to the Legal Services Commission with any estimates.

SERVICES OF OTHER PROFESSIONALS • *Disbursements*

6.2.5 Records of disbursements:

The advice worker must complete the Client Information Form to show that a disbursement has been incurred, the date and amount.

A central Disbursements File is held by the finance department.

6.2.6 Invoice received for payment:

When the invoice is received from the sub-contractor, the invoice can be paid once the adviser has authorised it.

6.2.7 Notify internal admin.:

The advice worker must give internal admin the invoice marked authorised for payment

6.2.8 Complete case record:

A copy of the authorised invoice is kept on the client's file.

6.2.9 Payment of sub-contractor:

Internal admin may pay the sub-contractor.

Internal admin must notify the Advice Worker when payment has been made. The advice worker must update the client's file to show the date of payment.

SIGNPOSTING & REFERRAL

7. Signposting - this procedure covers:

The steps to be taken to identify situations when it is appropriate to signpost a client to another agency or firm of solicitors, and to ensure that the Community Legal Service Partnership (CLSP) can be given information on both the need for advice and service provision.

7.1 What is signposting?

Signposting is the term used by the Legal Services Commission (LSC) when an adviser identifies an appropriate source of advice with the client and provides contact details so that the client can get in touch with the organisation.

All CAB advisers are trained to carry out signposting and will consider with the client whether it is the most appropriate way of meeting his or her advice needs. As a minimum the adviser will provide the client with the CLS Direct number 0845 345 4 345 and the CLS Direct website address www.clsdirect.org.uk

7.1.1 When is signposting appropriate?

Advisers will signpost clients to other services where:

- there is another agency or specialist worker who would deal with the client's enquiry more effectively
- the bureau cannot take on the work involved due to work overload, time limits etc.
- the client is confident in his/her ability to make contact with the other agency.

7.1.2 Community Legal Service Directory:

Advisers should in the first instance, consult the CLS Direct website which includes details of CLS Quality Mark and Criminal Defence Service (CDS) quality assured agencies.

SIGNPOSTING & REFERRAL

7.1.3 Keeping records on signposting:

When a client is signposted to another agency, this must be shown on the enquiry record.

7.2.1 What is referral?

Referral happens where, after discussion with the client, it is agreed that another organisation is more appropriate to assist the client and the Adviser contacts the other agency or solicitors' firm on the client's behalf. Reasons for this could include:

- characteristics of the client, such as language or mental health problems, etc
- where the issue is complex so that someone needs technical training in order to be able to explain it
- the bureau has carried out work on behalf of the client
- there are papers to be transferred.

7.2.2 When to refer out:

Some problems will require immediate referral where, for example:

- there is another agency which would deal with the client's enquiry more effectively
- the bureau cannot take on the work involved due to work overload, time limits etc.
- it seems likely that proceedings will be or should be issued and the client will need to instruct a solicitor.

SIGNPOSTING & REFERRAL

Others will require referral after some work has been undertaken by the bureau, because for example:

- negotiation with third party is not producing results and the client has a case worth pursuing through issuing proceedings
- it is clear that the problem requires resources and/or expertise which can be provided by another agency.

7.2.3 Deciding where to refer – Community Legal Service Direct

Advisers should in the first instance, consult the Community Legal Service Direct website or helpline, which includes details of CLS Quality Mark and Criminal Defence Service quality assured agencies.

7.2.4 No suitable CLS/CDS provider:

If no suitable provider can be found or if none of those listed can take a referral, the adviser will try to identify if there is a provider who is not listed; but meets the following selection criteria:

- independence
- respect for client confidentiality
- suitable service available
- equal opportunities
- client care
- able to take action within the required timescale
- appropriate quality assurance, for example membership of a Law Society Panel.

7.2.5 How to refer a client - general:

When the adviser has decided that it is appropriate to refer the client's case to another provider, he or she will:

- **Discuss the referral with the client**
 - why it is appropriate to make a referral
 - ask the client if he/she has any preferences
 - explain the cost implications of being referred elsewhere and record on the case file
 - explain what referral will involve e.g. appearance in court, likely timescale.
- **Make contact for the client**

The adviser should offer to make an appointment on the client's behalf. The adviser should normally send a letter of introduction to the new agency or solicitor confirming the arrangements and giving a brief outline of the client's problem. If more convenient, the letter could be given to the client to take personally. A copy should also be provided for the client to keep.

SIGNPOSTING & REFERRAL

- **Legal Help scheme and Community Legal Service Fund**

When working under an LSC contact, the adviser must assess whether every client is financially eligible for help under the Legal Help scheme. If referring to a solicitor or other agency with a contract, the adviser must inform them if the client has already received advice and assistance from the Community Legal Service Fund on the matter using the standard referral letter.

Advisers should be able to give some indication to clients as to whether they are likely to be financially eligible for Community Legal Service funding under the Funding Code.

7.2.6 Referral to a solicitor:

Clients should be free to make their own choice of solicitor, but in doing so they are entitled to the best information which the bureau can provide.

Having consulted CLS Direct, the adviser may recommend a particular solicitor where he or she considers that the solicitor will provide a service suitable to the client's needs. Where more than one solicitor will equally meet the needs of the client, the client should be offered a choice.

SUPERVISION

8 Independent File Review Procedure : Paid Generalist Advisors

Independent file reviews are conducted for paid staff only.

Frequency of Review

The staff member conducting the review will randomly select the appropriate number of case files, which cover a typical profile of the work of the advisor: -

- Inexperienced/new generalist advisors - 3 case files per month.
This category refers to those with less than 6 months recent fulltime or equivalent experience, or those new to the CAB.
- Generalist advisors with post 6 months experience - 2 case files per month.
The reduction from 4 to 3 case files is subject to agreement with the caseworker's supervisor and the projects manager.
- Experienced generalist advisors - 1 case files a month
This category refers to those with over 12 months recent fulltime or equivalent experience.

IFRs should be conducted by a designated experienced generalist advisor/supervisor/manager according to the schedule provided.

Content of Review

The review is conducted using the Independent File Review sheet, which incorporates the Citizens Advice Quality of Advice Assessments (QAA) criteria.

It includes the following elements:

- Diagnosis, including social policy issues
- Gathering information and evidence
- Options, consequences and limitations
- Appropriateness of information advice and action
- Referral
- Accuracy/completeness of advice
- Case management

Conducting the Review

- Both the electronic case record and the associated paper file should be consulted.
- Any comments, matters of concern or action need to be recorded on the IRF sheet.

SUPERVISION

- The reviewer must add a note on the electronic case record to state that the review has taken place.
- Results of Independent File Reviews must be fed back to the advisor and considered as part of the appraisal.
- Any corrective action required should be carried out within a reasonable time, it is the responsibility of the reviewer to check that this happened within 14 days of the file review and properly recorded on the file.
- Advice workers will note any remedial action completed on the electronic case record and sign the IFR sheet to signify they have read the review and undertaken any required action.

Monitoring File Review Records

A central record will be held by the Projects Manager of the IFR sheets. This will be divided into a section for each advisor.

Where performance is consistently below standard, remedial action will be taken and recorded.

Records are viewed annually by the Project Manager to identify any trends. This information should be reported back to the Chief Executive who will use it to inform the review of the service performance by the District as a whole.

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SUPERVISION

Non LSC Funded Project Case Workers

Bi – Monthly/Monthly File Reviews for experienced caseworkers

<u>Caseworker</u>	<u>Reviewers</u>	<u>Number of Cases</u>
Harvey Budworth	Steve Blairs	1
Steve Lawton	Steve Blairs	1
Wayne Needham	Steve Blairs	1
Anne-Marie Sheehy	Steve Blairs	1
Saima Shezadi	Steve Blairs	1
Christine Whitehead	Anne Hawkins	2

Independent File Reviews to be submitted by the last working day of even months i.e February, April, June, August, October, December.

Monthly Independent File Reviews for inexperience/new caseworkers

<u>Caseworker</u>	<u>Reviewers</u>	<u>Number of Cases</u>
Paul Horsman	Steve Blairs	3

Independent File Reviews to be submitted by the last working day of each month.

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SUPERVISION

LSC Funded Project Case Workers

Bi-Monthly Independent File Reviews for experienced LSC caseworkers

<u>Caseworker</u>	<u>Reviewers</u>	<u>Number of Cases</u>
Carole Moores	Ryan Moores	2
Ryan Wharmby	Carole Moores	2
Tahra Javed	Harvey Budworth	2
Anne Hawkins	Christine Whitehead	2

Independent File Reviews to be submitted by the last working day in March, June, September, December.

Monthly Independent File Reviews for inexperience/new caseworkers

<u>Caseworker</u>	<u>Reviewers</u>	<u>Number of Cases</u>
David Oglaza	Carole/Ryan	3
*Robina Nadeem	Tahra Javed	3
Saira Sadiq	Tahra Javed	3

SUPERVISION

8.1 Incoming post - opening:

Incoming post is opened by the service manager or other authorised person and date stamped. If the author of incoming post has failed to use the client and/or case reference and it is not clear to which case the document relates checks should be made in bureau to establish who the correspondence relates to.

If no outcome is possible then the correspondence is returned to the author.

Post is booked in by admin staff.

8.2.1 Incoming post - distribution:

Post is then distributed by administration who will place in the relevant staff pigeon holes.

8.2.2 Outgoing post:

Outgoing post is usually signed by the author.

8.3.1 Checking case records – advisers new to LSC contracting

Advisers new to LSC contracting work under close supervision by the LSC Supervisor. As part of the induction procedure, the supervisor and the adviser will agree an appropriate level of case checking and the frequency of individual meetings. For example, case checking could be on a daily basis at first and become less frequent as the new adviser gains confidence and expertise.

8.3.2 Checking case records - experienced advisers

The supervisor will be aware of caseload issues, through individual and weekly meetings; through reading incoming post, and through the Independent File Review procedure. Any additional case checking procedure will be agreed between the adviser and the supervisor who will make a note of the agreement and file it in the Supervisor's Record

In addition, advisers with substantial experience will generally be able to identify for themselves the issues on which they need guidance. They are encouraged to discuss cases and raise issues with other experienced colleagues, particularly with the supervisor.

Advisers have a responsibility to monitor their workload and notify the supervisor of any scheduling problems.

SUPERVISION

8.4.1 Monthly casework meetings:

There is a casework meeting every month. The casework meeting ensures that everyone doing LSC contract work in a particular subject has a degree of familiarity with ongoing cases and that social policy issues are identified.

The casework meeting is attended by the supervisor and all advisers involved in LSC funded work. They will consider the notes made at the last meeting to see if there are any matters arising to report.

SUPERVISION

In addition, they may raise any issues which are particularly relevant to current casework, perhaps because the issue is new, or could be of general interest, whether these are in relation to new cases, progress or problems on existing cases, reading, changes in the law and/or practice or other relevant information.

Casework meetings also provide an opportunity to share information, which may suggest a need for social policy work. This may be progressed through the LSC funded unit itself, more widely through the bureau or at regional/national level as appropriate.

A note of key issues identified and action agreed is taken by one of the advisers on a rota basis. It is given to the supervisor who files it in the Supervisor's Record in the Weekly Casework Meetings section.

8.4.2 Individual supervision meetings

Each adviser has an individual supervision meeting with the supervisor. The standard agenda for these meetings includes the following:

- case tactics and strategy
- progress on existing cases
- competence and capacity to deal with current workload
- cases which have been inactive since the last meeting
- successful and unsuccessful outcomes
- any training needs.

The adviser will bring any case files which he or she wishes to discuss, and the supervisor may ask him or her to bring other case files. If a case file is discussed during a supervision session, a note of the date will be made.

A record of the key points raised during the meeting, and any action to be taken by the adviser or supervisor will be made at the end of the meeting.

SUPERVISION

8.4.3 Informal methods of supervision:

In addition to the formal procedures above, the bureau encourages a great degree of informal discussion of cases between advisers and the supervisor(s). Advisers will always discuss a case with their supervisor if it is causing them concern and will not wait for a formal supervision meeting.

8.4.4 Availability of the Supervisor:

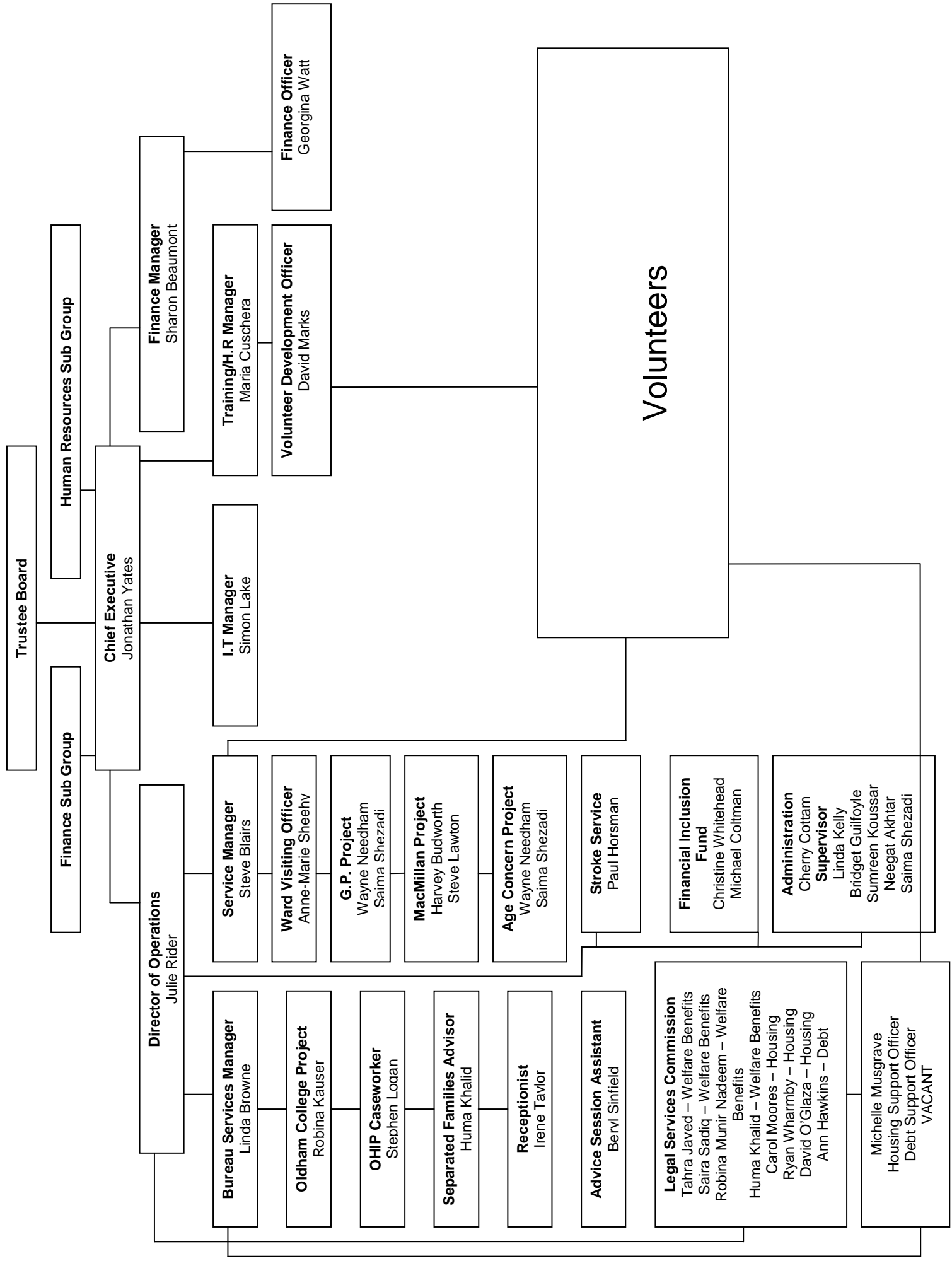
The supervisor will be available for consultation during service delivery hours. If the supervisor is absent due to annual leave, training etc. an appropriate acting supervisor will be nominated. The acting supervisor will report back to the supervisor any issues of note.

Office Manual for Specialist Help Level

Issue Date : [12/05]

LIST OF CURRENT PROCEDURES WITH ISSUE DATE

PROCEDURE	DATE
Introduction	
Management Structure	
Recruitment & Selection	
Induction of New Staff	
Staffing & Equal Opportunities	
Training	
Appraisal	
Complaints	
Feedback – Clients views on services /	
Conflict of Interest	
Opening a New File	
Outset of a Case	
Case Administration	
Time Limits - Key Dates -Diary Systems	
Progress of the Case – keeping the client informed	
The End of the Case – information for the client	
The End of the Case –administration	
Services of Other Professionals – when to use	
Disbursements	
Signposting & Referral	
Supervision/Independent File Reviews	
Appendix	



Volunteers

File Review/Discussion

Date:

Client name and ref no:

Are contract requirement complete ie, legal help forms, proof of income, who is running the case etc?

Advice so far:

Discussion of case/issues arising:

Other issues/corrective action:

Referrals, disbursements etc:

Signatures:

Reviewer:

Caseworker:

Date:

OLDHAM CAB Caseworkers Independent File Review



Please note: A copy of this IFR must be retained with the files paper work and the original handed back to supervisor. A note that the IFR has been carried out needs entering onto the CASE record and front cover of file/case cover sheet. Sign & date on completion of any action undertaken by both staff members.

CLIENTS NAME & CASE REF:	DATE:
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ADVISER:	CHECKED BY:
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ISSUE	Y/N/NA	ACTION NEEDED & POINTS RAISED
<p>Case outset and file management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients name / contact details recorded? • File orderly/documents/paper secure? • If complex—case plan set out? • Record of clients instructions? • Easy to follow case record? • Key dates noted/brought forward system used? • Responsibility for conducting case? • Confirmation in writing/ on option sheet? • Written client authorisation obtained/FOA/ checked on CASE box? • Client informed on CAB’s ability/willingness to act/represent at Tribunal etc? • Copies of forms/letters etc kept and originals returned to client? • LSC Calculation carried out on file/or CASE? 		
<p>Explorations/Advice/Options Given</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant background and diagnosis details recorded? • All available options discussed with client? • Client received accurate & relevant advice? • Correct assessment of urgency of problem? • Impact of advice given was it positive/negative? • Additional issues identified by the advisor? • Any missed issues? • Time limits explained? • Confidentiality maintained? • Practical assistance offered • Calculations carried out/attached/recorded on file or CASE? • Was option sheet correctly completed? • Action needed/agreed, who will do this client or caseworker, is it clear? • Was advice given in a non-judgmental way? 		
<p>Information Sources Used</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant sources of information used and recorded:- Advisernet/CPAG/Specialist Consultancy/other noted? • References paragraphs/page numbers etc recorded? 		
<p>Case Progression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client been updated on case progress etc? • Client informed of any changes to action etc? • Is case progress easy to follow? 		
<p>Referral/Signposting/Services of others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case fully or partly referred/expert used? • Correct procedures followed? • Was it appropriate to do so? • Client informed of any potential costs/availability of help with costs? 		

List of Volunteer/Trustees – 21.06.10

Amy Millar
Brian Varley
Carl Hewson
Christopher Townley
David Bartlett
David Powell
David Shipp
Gordon Travis
Grace Barnett
Grant Walker
Harry Booth
Jeffrey Wilson
Joyce Sinkinson
Kenneth Wingate
Kirsty Taylor
Lesley Treanor
Maggie Field
Margaret Bagley
Mothiur Rahman
Neil Gardner
Pat Griffiths (Admin)
Peter Jones
Sulbia Khanam-Quddus
Susan Meekings
Susan Warrington (Admin)
Victoria Horrocks
Yvonne Pollard

Trustees

Abdul Rashid
Carl Cover (Chair)
Paula Boshell
Richard Beaumont
Richard Roberts
Sally Lawton
Yvonne Lee

Shaw Outreach Service

Shaw Parish Council
Council Offices
High Street
Shaw
Oldham OL2 8RF

HOURS OF SERVICE: -

TUESDAY **1.30 pm. - 3.30 pm.**
(No appointment needed)

OLDHAM CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU

1 & 2 Ascroft Court, Peter Street
Oldham, OL1 1HP

Administration line: **0161 620 9317**
Fax no: **0161 621 4390**

HOURS OF SERVICE: -

MONDAY—THURSDAY **9.00 am - 4.00 pm**
FRIDAY **9.00 am - 1.00 pm**

Clients may be given an initial interview of a maximum time of **15 minutes** subject to **advisor availability**

Debt Advice available*

Wednesday 9.30am - 12.30pm

***Drop in Service - limited numbers seen.**

***Service subject to change due to high demand**

Housing Advice - Monday 1.00pm - 4.00pm
Wednesday 2.00pm - 4.00pm

Drop in Service - limited numbers

GP Project

Outreach's at 7 Health Centres across the Borough.
Accessible by registered patients of the Health Centre.

Sessions held as follows:

* These outreach sessions are extremely busy and it may not be possible to see all clients.
Home Visits may be available to patients.

<u>Venue</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Time</u>
Royton	Monday	10.00 am - 12.30 pm
Integrated Care Centre	Monday	2.00 pm - 4.00 pm
Westwood	Tuesday	10.00 am - 12.00 pm
Glodwick	Wednesday	2.00 pm - 4.00 pm *
Failsworth	Thursday	10.00 am - 12.00 pm
Limeside Clinic	Thursday	2.00 pm - 4.00 pm *
Fields New Road	Friday	9.30 am - 11.30 am

OLDHAM CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU
HOSPITAL EXTENSION BUREAU

Forest House, Chapel Walk
Royal Oldham Hospital
Rochdale Road
Oldham OL1 2JH

APPOINTMENTS ONLY SERVICE

Ward Visits available on request on:

Monday to Friday from: 10.00 am - 4.00 pm

Please ring on:

Tel no: 0161 627 8333

Fax no: 0161 627 8333

Leave your name and contact number—we
return all calls [messages left only with consent]

The Service is open to everyone; patients,
hospital staff members and visitors.

Macmillan Project

Welfare Benefits advice for people
affected by cancer including
Family and carers.

Available Monday—Friday 9.30 to 4pm.
Telephone: 0161 620 9317

TELEPHONE ADVICE SERVICE

Available on following days:

Monday 10.30 am - 3.30 pm

Tuesday 10.30 am - 3.30 pm

Tel: 0844 847 2638

CIVIC CENTRE - ACCESS OLDHAM

Ground Floor, West Street, Oldham, OL1 1UT

Available on following days:

Monday - 9.00am to 4pm

Wednesday - 9.30am to 4pm

Thursday - 9:00 to 4pm

Friday - 9.00am to 4pm

Volunteers

Oldham District Citizens Advice Bureau

Service details



Wanted

- Got time to spare?
- Want to do something worthwhile?
- Do you enjoy meeting people?
- Do you want to give something back to your community?
- Do you want to learn new skills?

If so, you may be the person we are looking for. All we ask for is commitment and flexibility of your time. You will be given full training and all expenses, including some child care expenses, will be paid.

Interested?

Visit:- www.oldhamcab.co.uk to download an application form or complete it online

Our Service Aims

- To Provide the advice people need for the problems they face
- To improve the policies and practices that affect peoples lives

Delivering Advice to the heart of the community since 1939

Advice available 365 days a year
@ www.adviceguide.org.uk

Details correct as of January 2010

The Advice we offer is:
Free, Impartial, Independent & strictly Confidential

We provide information and advice
and on the following:

- * Benefits
- * Consumer
- * Debt
- * Employment
- * Housing
- * Utilities
- * Immigration/Nationality
- * Tax

Plus many other issues

Oldham Citizens Advice Bureau

**LEGAL AID FRANCHISE & SPECIAL
CASEWORK SERVICE**

Housing - - - - - 0161 620 9317
Money Advice - - - - - 0161 620 9317
Welfare Rights- - - - - 0161 620 9317

The services are accessible by referral only

Partners

The services we provide would not be possible without the
funding and support of the following organisations.



Oldham District Citizens Advice Bureau is a
charity, our advice services are staffed mainly
by volunteers who give up their free time to
help people in need of advice.

We appreciate your patience and
understanding when trying to
access our services

**Citizens
Advice
Office Manual Kit
Specialist Help
Level**

**Designed to comply with
Community Legal Service Quality Mark
Specialist Help Level**



**citizens
advice
bureau**

Issue Date: 09/09

Declaration of Interests Form

As a registered charity, the bureau service has to disclose any material transaction, contract or other arrangement with 'connected persons'. Transactions involving trustees personally, directly or indirectly (through family or business connections) are material transactions.

Where a trustee or anyone connected with a trustee receives any remuneration from the bureau service (directly or indirectly via another organisation), this must be disclosed in the Notes to the Annual Accounts.

Trustees are asked to complete this form so that the bureau can comply with legal requirements. Further advice and guidance can be obtained from Citizens Advice.

Name of Trustee: _____

Trustee's employment

Partner's employment

Nature of trustee's employment interest

Other interest or involvement of the trustee or connected persons, including business interests, directorships, shareholdings, elected office, trusteeship, other public appointments, which may be relevant to the Bureau service of the trustee or members of his/her household

I have no personal or financial interests to declare () tick if applicable

Signed:

Date:

