

Generalist Advice Provision	12 September 2017
To: Leisure & Development Committee For Decision	

Linkage to Council Strategy (2015-19)	
Strategic Theme	Resilient, Healthy & Engaged Communities
Outcome	Council will work to develop and promote stable and cohesive communities across the Borough
Lead Officer	Head of Community & Culture Community Development Manager
Cost: (If applicable)	£202,000

The purpose of this report is to present the findings of a review of the Generalist Advice Provision Contract for Causeway Coast and Glens, and to seek approval from Members for the most suitable commissioning approach for the Service in the Borough from 1st April 2018 onwards.

Current Position

Generalist Advice in Causeway Coast and Glens is currently provided by the Causeway Advice Services Consortium, a partnership of Causeway Citizens Advice and Limavady Community Development Initiative (LCDI) through a 2 year contract for the period 1st April 2016 – 31st March 2018. Citizens Advice is the lead partner and is the delivery agent for the former Coleraine, Ballymoney and Moyle areas. LCDI is responsible for the Limavady area and subcontracts a proportion of the work to Glenshane Community Development Initiative which provides advice in the Dungiven area.

The annual value of the contract for Generalist Advice provision in Causeway Coast and Glens is £202,000. Of this amount £88,371.00 is received by Council from DfC through the Community Support Programme.

The current contract replicated previous legacy Council contracts in terms of locations, targets etc. The legacy councils had different approaches to supporting advice and the merged approach does not best reflect current need or demand and as such does not provide a consistent or appropriate level of provision across the borough.

Since the current contract is due to finish on 31st March 2018, and in preparation for commissioning the service beyond this date, Williamson Consulting were commissioned to carry out a review in order to allow for an objective assessment of need based on population, levels of deprivation and rurality.

Findings of the Report

The Report into the Review and Design of Specification for Generalist Advice Contract is attached at **Annex A**.

In broad terms, it is generally accepted that the need for advice relates to population and deprivation with a much higher proportion of those who are living in disadvantaged areas requiring advice. In the Causeway Coast and Glens area it is clear that this is also true and is reflected by the very high proportion of enquiries about benefit related issues.

The report uses a formula to calculate the level of funding ie. % of the contract that should be allocated per area using a 'needs-based' formula rather than on previous history of provision. The legacy Council boundaries are still being used until new deprivation statistics are available for new wards and DEA boundaries. As it is more difficult and more costly to provide advice in most rural areas, rural areas within each legacy council area are given a slightly higher weighting to reflect this. In the appendices of the report, an analysis of need based on a deprivation, population and rurality formula is detailed.

Table 1 shows how the level of enquiries per legacy Council area during 2016/17 compares to the anticipated need for advice per legacy Council area based on the indicators detailed earlier. As the table shows, the amount of advice provided in Ballymoney is slightly behind the need indicator with Coleraine slightly ahead, however no significant changes are needed. On the other hand, Moyle enquiry level is well behind the need indicator and the report recommends focusing more provision in this area and working on a dedicated campaign to increase uptake. The proportion of enquiries in the Limavady area is well ahead of the new indicator.

Table 1	% of actual enquiries in the Borough 2016-17	Indicated Need (% of enquiries in the Borough) based on population statistics with weighting applied for deprivation and rurality
Ballymoney	14.9%	17.9%
Coleraine	42.9%	40.3%
Moyle	7.2%	16.6%
Limavady	35.0%	25.2%

Key Recommendations of the Report

The key recommendations from the report are as follows:

- The *Causeway Coast and Glens Standards and Guidelines for Provision of Generalist Advice* document should continue to be used as the standard for providers until DfC completes its work on centralised support for advice.
- The Causeway Coast and Glens Advice Specification continues to be largely relevant and minor changes are proposed to the geographical breakdown of the overall target across the Borough.
- Advice should continue in the primary premises already listed, although targets should be updated to reflect need. The overall total should be 30,000 enquiries.
- Promotional work needs to be undertaken across the Moyle area to increase uptake in both Cushendall and Bushmills.
- The target for adviser numbers in each location should be scrapped.
- Council should make the commissioning agreement or Service Level Agreement for a 3 - 5 year period, but subject to annual review.
- Council should perform a number of checks at the start of the agreement and annually to ensure providers are meeting accepted standards.
- Clients should have access to at least one evening's advice provision per week.

Recommendation

1. Council approves the recommendations of the *Review and Design of Specification for Generalist Advice Contract* report.
2. Council commences a public procurement exercise for *Generalist Advice Provision for the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough* for the period 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019, with an extension clause for a 2 further years, subject to Department for Communities funding.

ANNEX A

REVIEW & DESIGN OF SPECIFICATION FOR GENERALIST ADVICE CONTRACT

FOR CAUSEWAY COAST AND GLENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL

JULY 2017



TURNING COMPLEX PROBLEMS INTO SIMPLE SOLUTIONS

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1 Executive Summary

- 1.1.1 The purpose of this document is to provide a report which will allow Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council to determine the most suitable commissioning approach for generalist voluntary advice services for the period from 1 April 2018 onwards. The brief is summarised in section 2.1.
- 1.1.2 Currently advice is provided by the Causeway Advice Services Consortium, a partnership of Causeway Citizens Advice and Limavady Community Development Initiative. (LCDI). Citizens Advice is the lead partner and is responsible for the performance of other partners, also being the delivery agent for Coleraine, Ballymoney and Moyle. LCDI is responsible for the Limavady area and subcontracts a proportion of the work (outside the main Council contract) to Glenshane Community Development Initiative which provides advice in the Dungiven area. Both main providers have exceeded the target for advice enquiries set by Council for the period 2016/17 and both believe the volume of enquiries during 2017/18 to date is greater than in previous years.
- 1.1.3 The allocation of funding by legacy Council area has replicated previous legacy Council contracts and as a result is not based on any objective assessment of need. Ideally need would be considered on a ward and District Electoral Area basis. The primary determinants of need are population, deprivation and rurality. However, NISRA's deprivation statistics continue to be based on pre local government reorganisation electoral boundaries. While an extensive mapping exercise could relate client postcodes to the new DEAs, there is little justification for such work at this stage and the legacy Council boundaries can continue to be used until new deprivation statistics are available. It is recommended however that the DEAs be used when possible. An analysis of advice statistics for 2016/17 shows some mismatch between Council's target enquiry numbers, levels of need and actual advice statistics. This reinforces the need for targets which better reflect need. The analysis of need by area is included in the appendices.
- 1.1.4 The detailed recommendations are set out in Section 2.4. The key issues are as follows:
- The Standards and Guidelines document should continue to be used as the standard for providers until DfC completes its work on centralised support for advice.

- The Causeway Coast and Glens Advice Specification continues to be largely relevant and minor changes are proposed.
- Advice should continue in the primary premises already listed, although targets should be updated to reflect need. The overall total should be 30,000 enquiries.
- Promotional work needs to be undertaken across the Moyle area to increase uptake in both Cushendall and Bushmills.
- The target for adviser numbers in each location should be scrapped.
- Council should make the commissioning agreement or Service Level Agreement for a 3 - 5 year period, but subject to annual review.
- Council should perform a number of checks at the start of the agreement and annually to ensure providers are meeting accepted standards. These are set out in detail in Section 2.4.
- Clients should have access to at least one evening's advice provision per week.

2 Review of Advice Contract

2.1 The Brief

2.1.1 As a result of the merger of the four legacy councils of Ballymoney, Coleraine, Limavady and Moyle in April 2015, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council developed a specification for generalist advice provision across the area merging the individual specifications from each of the legacy council contracts. Advice centre locations, outreach provision and similar 'enquiry' targets were included. In practice, the legacy councils had a completely different approach to supporting advice and it is probable that this merged situation does not best reflect need or demand and may not provide a consistent or appropriate level of provision across the borough. Council also believes that current funding arrangements may not reflect the overheads incurred by the front-line advice provider as this has not changed for several years. To this end, Council wishes to carry out a review of the contract and to produce an appropriate specification for commissioning the service for the period 1 April 2018 onwards. The key requirements for this brief review include:

- Review of the current generalist advice contract to include an analysis of statistics for clients and enquiries, outreach provision and a subsequent review of targets for any new contract.
- Consider levels of need at Ward and DEA level based on deprivation and rurality and consider weighting in relation to each of these factors.
- Review of hours of operation and locations for outreach provision including whether the current locations are meeting a need, providing value for money and any gaps.
- Consideration of the cost of provision of this service over the next three years.
- Review of the type of provision – face to face, telephone, online, etc.
- Review of how the service is monitored and the reporting mechanisms and quality assurance.
- Consideration of the current and emerging strategy and guidance from DfC.
- Development of a specification for the contract for generalist advice provision for the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council for period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2021 including appropriate targets, locations and methods of delivery and consideration of weighting in relation to deprivation

and rurality, consistent with the Principles and Objectives for Advice as detailed in the Williamson Report (2012).

2.2 Current Provision and Contract

The Existing Advice Contract

- 2.2.1 Advice is currently provided by a consortium headed by Citizens Advice Causeway. Limavady Community Development Initiative (LCDI) works as a partner reporting through Citizens Advice. Glenshane Community Development Limited provides advice in the Dungiven area under a subcontract with LCDI, although this arrangement does not appear within the Council contract. The consortium appears to have worked effectively, probably because both Citizens Advice Causeway and LCDI are credible, good quality advice providers with a degree of mutual respect and a clear understanding of the boundaries of each organisation's work within the contract. Effectively therefore Citizens Advice Causeway provides advice to the people of the legacy council areas of Ballymoney, Coleraine and Moyle while LCDI provides advice to people of the legacy Limavady council area, with the Dungiven area sub-contracted to GCDI outside the main contract.
- 2.2.2 The current contract is an extension of a two year contract which was put out through an open procurement process in late 2015. It is currently run from 1 April 2016 and will continue until 31 March 2018. In addition to the primary contract, advice providers are expected to fulfil the requirements set out in the 'Standards and Guidelines for the Provision of Generalist Voluntary Advice Services' document for the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area. A detailed specification for advice in the Council area was also set out in an appendix to the contract. The primary contract allows for a total cost of £202,000 per annum which would be paid to Citizens Advice Causeway as the project lead for the Causeway and Glens Advice Services Consortium, working with LCDI as a named partner within the consortium contract. The Lead Partner (Citizens Advice) carries overall administrative and financial responsibility for implementing the project. Funding was to be subject to continuing awards by the Department for Social Development (now Department for Communities) and can only cover eligible costs. On an annual basis, Council advances 50% of the annual payment on an initial invoice with a further 45% midway through the year and the remaining 5% as a retention paid on confirmation of successful completion of all programme deliverables. The contract allows for Council inspection of any of the services on the premises at any reasonable time. However, in practice the contract has been

managed with a fairly “light touch”; as is appropriate in the case of two organisations who have a sound track record and provide Council with adequate statistical information. Most aspects of the contract are similar to contracts Council would have with other contractors or service providers and require similar conditions, although these are in addition to the requirement to meet the Standards and Guidelines document and to fulfil the targets in the project.

2.2.3 Annex E of the contract sets out the detailed requirements. These include:

- The location of primary advice services in Council premises in Ballymoney; a central town location in Coleraine; central and accessible location in Limavady and Council premises in Ballycastle.
- Outreach provision in Dungiven; Cushendall; and Bushmills.
- Annual target enquiry numbers including:
 - Ballymoney – 2,000 per annum
 - Coleraine – 15,000 per annum
 - Limavady and Dungiven – 10,000 per annum
 - Ballycastle, Cushendall and Bushmills – 1000 per annum
- Minimum times for provision of advice in each of the locations are all set out within the contract document.
- The number of full time equivalent advisers is anticipated and spelled out for each of the areas.

The budget for the project is set out in terms of anticipated staff costs and overhead costs.

2.2.4 **The Strategic Context**

The strategic framework for generalist voluntary advice services in Northern Ireland continues to be the Department for Communities’ ‘Advising, Supporting, Empowering’ strategy for advice. This document sets the high level direction for advice for the period from 2015 to 2020. It would be inappropriate to spell out all of the details within this strategy however the key elements include:

- A focus on empowering and enabling people to help themselves.
- A collaborative, aligned and complementary approach to advice services, leading to better efficiency.

- A sustainable advice sector maximising the impact of resources through new models for delivery.
- Maximising accessibility to quality advice services including a new Northern Ireland Advice Quality Standard, increased web and online presence and greater levels of telephone usage.
- Encouraging the role of the advice sector in contributing to policy development.
- Consistency of record keeping and record management, high quality training and encouraging volunteering.

The Department recently commissioned a review of centralised support structures for the local advice sector. Currently the Department is working through the implementation of this document and it is probable that there will be a move over the next few years to greater commonality and efficiency in support provision. This is likely to result in greater standardisation of quality, case recording and training which should in theory make it easier for consortium or partnership approaches. Nothing within the review is likely to require fundamental change in how Council is working towards developing the best possible consortium commission for the council area.

Overview of Causeway Advice Services Consortium Provision

- 2.2.5 Citizens Advice Causeway has had an increasing workload during 2017. The construction of the legacy council contract focused a high proportion of the overall work in the Coleraine area and this has proved to be the case with nearly 43% of all enquiries coming from residents within the former Coleraine council area. However, actual enquiries from residents of the Coleraine area fell short of the 15,000 target by around 13% although most demand proves to have been met and possibly suggests that the contract is unbalanced towards Coleraine. Ballymoney in contrast, with its legacy contract of 2.5 days per week and 2,000 enquiries fell considerably short of demand which actually hit in excess of 4,500 enquiries during the year. Moyle, with its very low target of 1000 enquiries again required more than double amount of work, further showing the imbalance of the contract in its “legacy” form. This is explored graphically in following sections.
- 2.2.6 The Bureau indicated that its enquiries for the 2017/18 year are likely to be about 25% up on the 2016/17 figures and are putting considerable pressure on staff to meet the demand. The way in which enquiries are dealt with varies across the

locations however most outreach work is triaged¹ and longer appointments made where necessary. Shorter issues may be dealt with on an ad hoc basis. In Coleraine, all enquiries are by appointment although there is room for emergency drop in. Most enquiries are being dealt with within one week and suggest that Citizens Advice is currently able to cope with demand. As far as possible enquiries are dealt with by telephone or email as these require less time however face to face appointments are always available for those who need it or where forms have to be filled out. The introduction of Personal Independence Payments has impacted on the nature and need for advice and the introduction of Universal Credits in September 2017 is likely to again bring about change and perhaps more demand. Citizens Advice does not propose any changes to the outreach locations, which they believe are all working well. While Cushendall is perhaps the quietest of these, offering easier access to advice for people from the Glens area is important. Otherwise clients would have to travel to Ballymena which is a considerable distance, not in the CC&G Council area, and justifies this provision.

At present Council's funding to CAB of just over £150,000 levers a further £50,000 funding from other sources and makes this higher level of provision possible. Unlike some advice agencies which are struggling to get volunteers, Causeway Citizens Advice currently has six volunteers, three of whom provide advice and three provide receptionist or administration services. Citizens Advice noted that it will need to be able to provide IT and digital support for clients in the future because of the changes to welfare provision which require clients to communicate with the Social Security system on line. It was also noted that increasing use of web based advice and web access to advice is bringing about changes in the advice world and will ultimately need to be reflected in Council contracts. The consultants note that some of these changes will require centralised regional provision to change and, while this is being considered by DFC at present, it may be sometime away. The nature of the Service Level Agreement can lead to insecurity for staff and makes it more difficult to manage funding. Ideally Citizens Advice would like to have a three year Service Level Agreement, or indeed longer if possible. The consultants' proposal to consider allocation of advice funding on a geographical basis focused on need was enthusiastically endorsed by Citizens Advice who are keen to ensure that their provision is relevant and appropriately

¹ Triage involves an initial short discussion between a suitable trained advisor or triage receptionist which may take place by telephone, through email or face to face. The advice worker determines who the client should be advised by, how long an appointment should be and what preparation is required. On occasions the triage advisor may be able to deal with simple or straightforward enquiries on the spot. This approach ensures efficient use of resources, best quality of advice and minimises wasted time for advisors and clients.

located. The only area that they have not been able to meet new demand for is in Garvagh where there has been demand for outreach provision, however Citizens Advice are not confident that this would be affordable. In addition to outreach provision, Citizens Advice currently operates from the Coleraine premises on five days per week, opening from 9.30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday to Friday and in addition 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Thursdays. The latter is working well and in strong demand. Of all the outreach provision, Bushmills seems to be the one which is believed to be least well used and there may be an argument for reviewing hours of opening to better reflect actual need. Citizens Advice are very positive about the relationship they have with Council Officers who they believe are well informed and have a sound understanding of the issues. They noted that their work with LCDI has been relatively trouble free and while the two organisations work differently and perhaps have a different ethos they have mutual respect in relation to their quality of provision.

2.2.7 LCDI are also generally happy with the contract for advice provision. They too note that the demand is bigger than the funding available in the area and that increasing demand is putting them under some pressure. They also noted that demand for provision had come from Garvagh and Kilrea and that there may be a case for potential outreach provision there. LCDI also manages a major debt programme called 'Step Change' which runs alongside the advice provision and complements it. They note that the users of Step Change tend to have a different profile, being less focused on benefits and more on unaffordable debt. In common with Citizens Advice, LCDI had moved to a much higher proportion of telephone advice which they have also found to be more cost effective and frees them up to use face to face advice when needed. They too run a triage system which ensures that people get advice in the best way and from the best person. LCDI management noted that the organisation had moved its advice approach from 80% face to face advice to only 20%. This was the result of a deliberate decision to maximise the use of resources in the most effective manner. While this approach is less common in the independent sector, it is becoming increasingly common among Citizens Advice organisations.

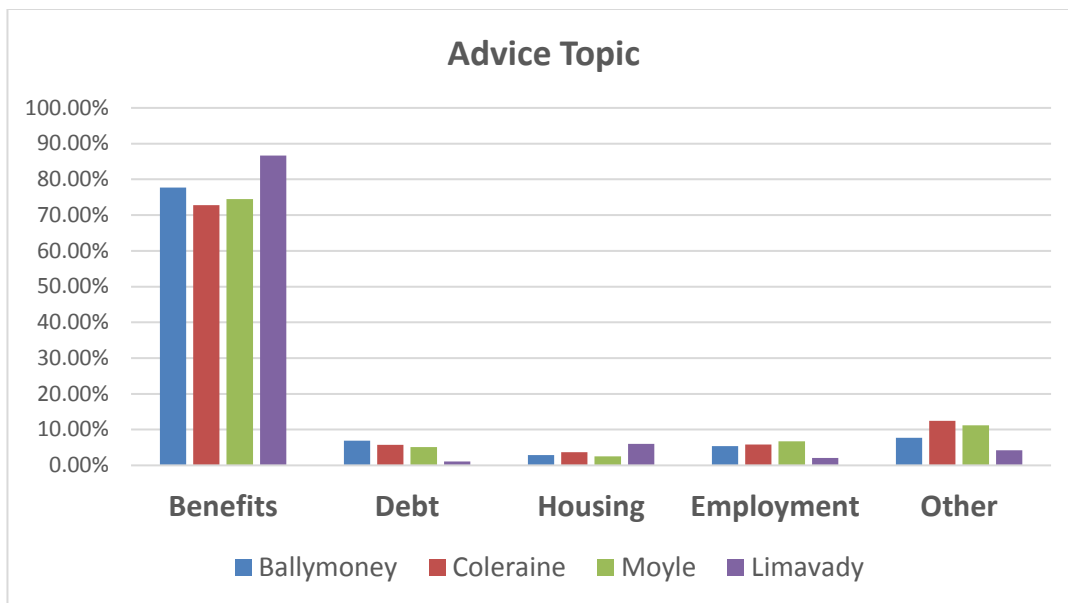
2.2.8 At present LCDI operates from a very wide range of outreach locations including Ballykelly, Magilligan, Gortnahey, Foreglen, Feeny, Drumboghill, Burnfoot, Greysteel and Drumsurn. Uptake on these is variable with Gortnahey and Greysteel being particularly in demand. In addition, using Neighbourhood Renewal funding, LCDI provides two half day per week sessions in Limavady's Neighbourhood Renewal area. Much of the rural outreach work is done by a former manager of the advice service working in a voluntary capacity and LCDI notes that they could not provide this range of outreach without his input. The

contract with Glenshane Community Development Initiative (GCDI) to provide advice in the Dungiven area is a direct sub contract from LCDI and is not included within the contract with Council. There are risks involved in this as this small provider may not meet the same standards as LCDI and Citizens Advice Causeway. While most of those involved appear to be generally content with the current position, Council may wish to receive assurance about the quality of case management, record keeping and compliance with Council's advice standards should any such subcontract result in future. LCDI has a memorandum of understanding with GCDI which they manage and payments are made monthly on the basis of reports and statistics, although there is no formal quality checking mechanism. Currently £15,000 annually is paid to GCDI for this work, a figure which LCDI believes to be too high considering the proportion of advice in the Dungiven area; which is approximately 20% of all the work being done under the LCDI Limavady element of the contract. Currently the Limavady contract with LCDI (which includes the GCDI work in Dungiven) is slightly over target for the 2016/17 year and believed to be approximately 10% to 15% higher month on month for the 2017/18 year to date.

- 2.2.9 An analysis of the advice work done during the last full calendar year of 2016/17 shows the following breakdown of advice by topic. This is broken down in the following table and shown graphically in the chart. As both show, benefits continue to be a very high proportion of the overall work with the next highest area being employment enquiries. It should be noted that debt enquiries are noticeably lower in Limavady area because they are dealt with by Step Change rather than LCDI's generalist advice service. In other respects, the proportion of enquiries across the area is broadly similar in each of the four legacy council areas.

Enquiries by Topic

Advice Topic					
	<u>Benefits</u>	<u>Debt</u>	<u>Housing</u>	<u>Employment</u>	<u>Other</u>
Ballymoney	77.70%	6.90%	2.90%	5.40%	7.70%
Coleraine	72.80%	5.70%	3.70%	5.80%	12.50%
Moyle	74.50%	5.10%	2.50%	6.70%	11.20%
Limavady	86.70%	1.10%	6%	2.10%	4.20%



An analysis of the number of enquiries done in each of the legacy areas compared to the targets set in the commissioning agreement is included in the following table. This shows that Coleraine enquiries fell approximately 13% below target while Ballymoney and Moyle were well ahead of target by more than 100% and Limavady slightly ahead of target.

Enquiries by Area

	<u>Enquiries (2016/17)</u>	<u>% of all</u>
Ballymoney	4,538	14.9%
Coleraine	13,082	42.9%
Moyle	2,186	7.2%
Limavady	10,670	35.0%

The following table compares performance for the two organisations in the contract. This shows that overall the consortium exceeded targets by 9% during 2016/17 with Citizens Advice Causeway being 10% ahead of target and LCDI being 7% ahead of target (this figure including work by GCDI).

Performance against Contract Targets (by organisation)

	<u>Enquiries (2016/17)</u>	<u>Target</u>	<u>% of Target</u>
CA Causeway	19,806	18,000	110%
LCDI	10,670	10,000	107%

Performance against Contract Targets (by area)

	<u>Enquiries (2016/17)</u>	<u>Target</u>	<u>% of Target</u>
Ballymoney	4538	2000	227%
Coleraine	13082	15000	87%
Moyle	2186	1000	219%
Limavady	10670	10000	107%
	30476	28000	109%

2.3 Analysis of Need and Proposed Contract Changes

- 2.3.1 A broad analysis of the level of demand for advice across the whole Council area shows that current provision does not best reflect demand. It would be inappropriate to simply design an advice system to reflect demand or need as there may be reasons for lack of uptake which are not associated with need. It is therefore more appropriate to look at need indicators and then consider how to promote the service to encourage uptake at an appropriate level. In broad terms, it is generally accepted that need for advice relates to population and deprivation with a much higher proportion of those who are living in disadvantaged areas requiring advice. In the Causeway Coast and Glens area it is clear that this is also true and reflected by the very high proportion of enquiries about benefit related issues. It would however be a mistake to assume that all benefit enquiries relate to the most disadvantaged communities as people living across affluent and disadvantaged wards alike include some residents who are on benefits and those who are affected by welfare of some kind. In the appendices, we have included an analysis of need based on a deprivation, population and rurality formula. In an ideal world, we would carry out such an analysis on the basis of current political boundaries, however, deprivation figures have not yet caught up with changes in local government. It is the consultants' view that a District Electoral Area is an appropriate size on which to base such calculations however

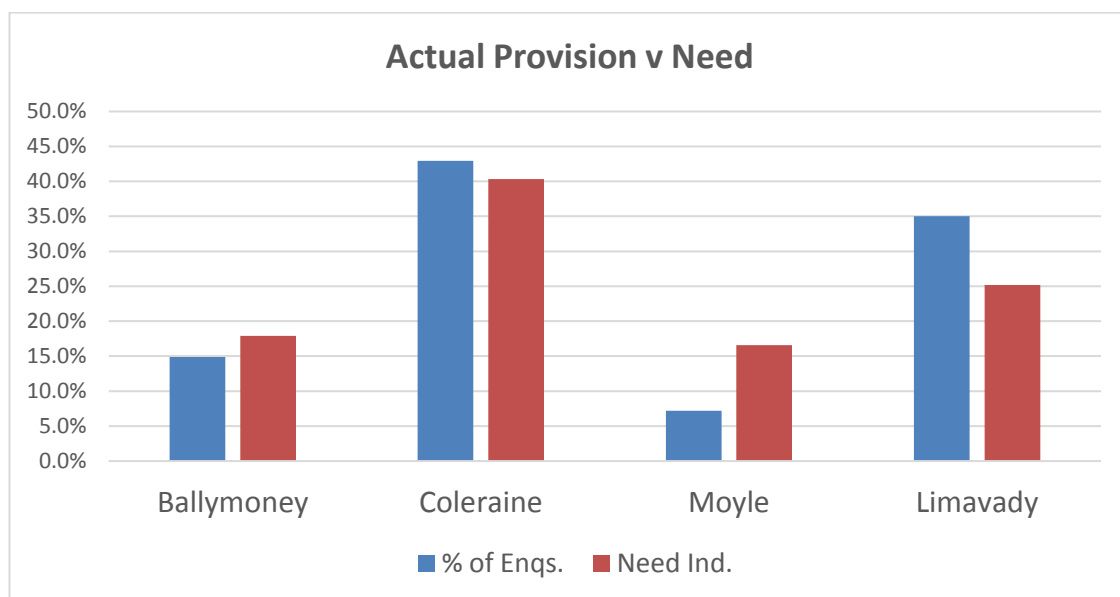
this would require us to have deprivation information for the new Council wards. In practice, the current deprivation information relates to the 2014 local government district wards pre-restructuring. An exercise to connect these to District Electoral Areas and postcodes is possible but would require a much larger and more complex piece of work than this report. This has been done in other areas and could be done should Council so wish. However, a practical alternative is to use the old pre-restructuring boundaries and to relate these to the original four legacy council areas. This in turn would allow us to allocate funding across those areas (i.e. the current advice areas) in the most appropriate manner to reflect need. The formula used in this case assumes that:

- The 10% most deprived wards should attract four times as much funding.
- Wards that fall into the 10% to 30% most deprived should attract three times as much funding.
- Wards that are not in the 30% most deprived would attract one times funding.
- As it is more difficult and more costly to provide advice in most rural areas, rural areas within each legacy council area are given a slightly higher weighting to reflect this. Wards that are some distance from provision have a been weighted at 1.2; while wards that are rural but closer to main population centres get a weighting of 1.1.

2.3.2 As the spreadsheet in the appendices shows, the analysis allows us to consider how funding should be allocated on the basis of the legacy council areas as at present, but using a 'needs-based' formula rather than on previous history of provision. The following table shows how the enquiries during 2016/17 breakdown on a basis of a percentage of all enquiries and compare them to the need indicators based on the percentage of advice actually anticipated in each of these areas. As the table shows, the amount of advice work done in Ballymoney is slightly behind the need indicator with Coleraine slightly ahead, however no significant changes are needed. On the other hand, Moyle enquiry level is well behind the need indicator, again reinforcing the view that people in this area tend to see themselves as self-sufficient and are perhaps reluctant to seek advice. This should not deter from focusing more provision in this area and working on a dedicated campaign to increase uptake as low advice uptake usually correlates with some failure to benefit from welfare rights. The proportion of enquiries in the Limavady area is well ahead of the new indicator.

Need and Uptake of Provision Compared

Need Indicator (4,3,1)		
	<u>% of Enqs.</u>	<u>Need Ind.</u>
Ballymoney	14.9%	17.9%
Coleraine	42.9%	40.3%
Moyle	7.2%	16.6%
Limavady	35.0%	25.2%



- 2.3.3 To allow us to think about the contract from April 2018 onwards, we need to consider how funding will be allocated across the four legacy council areas. As noted earlier, it would be preferable to do this on the basis of District Electoral Areas; however, this requires a larger mapping exercise which would be easiest to complete once deprivation information for the new council wards is available. Based on the existing legacy council areas, the recommended amount of funding per area (assuming that the current level of £202,000 continues) shows a breakdown which would be different in terms of allocation to each area than the current contract. However, significantly, the organisational breakdown of actual funding during 2016/17 to Causeway Citizens Advice and to LCDI works out remarkably similar to the allocation based on a needs formula (see table below).

There is therefore no fundamental reason to change the proportion of funding to each organisation, as long as they are addressing the legacy council areas as at present. This is of course not to say that the overall amount of funding is correct.

An analysis of funding per enquiry shows a cost of £6.63 for each enquiry addressed. This would be considerably lower than many of the council areas across Northern Ireland with some paying as much as £22 per enquiry at present. In general, it is thought that an enquiry cost of £12 - £15 is typical therefore the overall funding being put into advice in this area is considerably lower than good practice would suggest is appropriate. It is recognised that Council may have difficulty increasing funding to that level however a modest increase would start to address the growing demand and perhaps ensure an ongoing secure service.

Based on the needs and assuming the same enquiry target as the current contract (a total of 28,000) the allocation by area should follow the pattern set out in the following table. This would better reflect need. However, it is recognised that Coleraine and Limavady have shown higher demand and Moyle, as yet, has not fulfilled its potential in terms of anticipated need. It is therefore recommended that a range of promotional methods be used in the Moyle area to try to increase demand, while at the same time allowing some flexibility within the contracts for work to be done in other parts of the overall Council area where demand continues to be highest. To avoid any immediate upset in provision there is a strong argument for gradually introducing the new targets and these are set out in the attached amended draft funding contracts.

Proposed Funding Allocation by Area

	<u>Need Ind.</u>	<u>Fund. Calc.</u>	<u>£/agency</u>	<u>2016/17</u>
Ballymoney	17.9%	£36,144		
Coleraine	40.3%	£81,499	£151,114	£151,500
Moyle	16.6%	£33,471		
Limavady	25.2%	£50,888	£50,888	£50,500
	Total	£202,000		

2.4 Recommendations

2.4.1 We must then consider what the future commissioning agreement should look like.

- There is little to suggest that the Standards and Guidelines document requires significant change at present. This should continue to be used as the basis for setting the standards for the providers. As DfC is currently working on the reorganisation of centralised support for advice, some changes may be necessary in future however there is no urgency and the consultants would not recommend changing the document at present.
- Similarly, the core elements of the Causeway Coast and Glens Advice Specification continues to be largely relevant. However, some minor changes are required to align this with the proposed contract changes and these have been attached as an appendix to this document.
- Within the main contract, it is recommended that:
 - advice continues to be located in the primary premises listed within the document.
 - Council should enter into discussion with the providers to determine the level of provision that is appropriate in each case, based on actual need.
 - In addition, promotional work needs to be undertaken across the Moyle area to increase uptake in both Cushendall and Bushmills and perhaps to a lesser extent in Ballycastle and the contract should be sufficiently flexible to allow for this to grow in line with need should such promotional work be worthwhile.
 - It is recommended that the targets for advice be based on a total figure of 30,000, subject to appropriate amendments to total funding available. These should be allocated on a per legacy council area as indicated in the table above.
 - The consultants would not recommend requiring a certain number of full time advisers at each location as this could be restrictive and may not result in best use of resources at the present time. It is also important to note that the majority of clients from each area do not visit the advice office. The priority should be on addressing

need and, as much of this is undertaken by telephone, the location of advisers might be better organised than within the earlier contract. The current hours of opening in each location would appear to be appropriate however, this should be subject to ongoing review. Where a provider feels that these resources could be used better by changing the hours in any particular location, Council should be open to negotiating on this point as long as number of enquiries does not drop and the overall fit of advice with need continues to be appropriate.

- 2.4.2 If at all possible, it would be helpful for providers if the commissioning agreement or Service Level Agreement is as long as possible. This should however be subject to annual review to ensure that everything is on target and will allow providers to plan subject to ongoing high performance. Currently Council monitors the volume of advice undertaken utilising the standard DfC reporting format. Regrettably this does not allow Council to measure the actual quantity of work undertaken as there is no connection between the number and nature of enquiries and the time each requires. A better measure would be to consider the number of contacts (i.e. the number of times a client comes into contact with the advice provider irrespective of the number of enquiries dealt with) and to consider the time spent on each contact. Current case recording systems do not allow this to be calculated in a straight forward manner however should it be possible to do so in future with new case recording systems Council should consider introducing this alternative means of monitoring.
- 2.4.3 There are a number of checks that Council should make at the start of the contract and annually to ensure that these issues are being fully addressed and meet good practice standards. These should apply to all organisations providing advice under the Consortium agreement. No providers should be permitted to offer advice under this contract if they are not registered with Council and can demonstrate compliance with eth Advice Standards and Guideline and can fully address the following points:
- Data protection – all providers should be able to produce evidence of their Certificate of Registration from the Information Commissioner’s Office and should be able to demonstrate good practice in handling and management of data.
 - Providers should be able to demonstrate appropriate insurance including Professional Indemnity Insurance to protect those staff and volunteers giving advice.

- All those giving advice should be registered with Council and should be able to demonstrate recent and up to date advisor training (Citizens Advice Advisor Training Programme or Advice NI/Law Centre's Welfare Reform Advisor Programme as a minimum)
- Premises should meet the required standards for disability access. It is recognised that this will depend on the nature of the premises and how often it is used and perhaps softer standards could be used in some outreach locations where alternative premises are not available. However, primary advice premises should offer full disabled accessibility and there should be a plan in place to deal with specific disabilities that require equipment or support services of a specialised nature, subject to affordability and practicality.
- The overall advice service should continue to have at least one evening's access to advice services.
- Currently there are two quality standards being operated by advice providers in Northern Ireland. LCDI is using the new Northern Ireland Single Quality Standard while Citizens Advice operates its own internal quality standard which is obligatory to be a Citizens Advice Bureau. Council should ensure that all organisations providing advice under the contract have met the required standards within these quality standards and have in place a mechanism for external monitoring and internal quality management.
- All providers must have a case recording system in place that can produce reliable statistics, be audited and which records client postcodes in a way which will allow an analysis of geographical home locations for future monitoring and funding calculation purposes.

3 Appendices

3.1 Draft Contract*

3.2 Funding Analysis Spreadsheets

*Draft contract documents not for general viewing.