

Hillingdon and Ealing Citizens Advice

**Strategic
Business Development Plan
Summary
2009 – 2012**



Independent - Free – Confidential – Impartial



***Funded by London Borough of Hillingdon,
Hillingdon Primary Care Trust, Hillingdon Homes
and Hillingdon Community Trust***

1. Aims and Objectives – Statement of Purpose

Hillingdon and Ealing Citizens Advice (HECA) shares the aims, values and principles of the national CAB service, Citizens Advice, of which it is a member.

Our Aims

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

Our Principles

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.

Our Values

To focus on customers, achieve results, continuously improve, promote equality and fairness, value each other and work together.

Purpose

HECA specifically aims to serve the residents of the London Boroughs of Hillingdon and Ealing with the provision of reliable high quality advice and information on their rights and responsibilities.

It is an independent charitable organisation, and works in partnership with other voluntary, statutory and private agencies for the benefit of its clients.

HECA also intends to participate in the implementation of the Citizens Advice' Service Strategy 2008 – 2011 and local community strategies, pursuing common objectives:

- Improving access to good quality information and advice for more people
- Developing new initiatives in advice
- Developing social policy work
- Developing relationships and collaborative working with neighbouring CABx and other networks

2. Our Key Achievements over the past Three Years

Advice Service

- Dealt with 76,237 enquiry issues (mostly from residents of Hillingdon)
- Provided assistance with over £28.2 million of problem debts
- Gained over £3.4 million in additional income for local people and achieved 941 other 'non-financial' positive outcomes for clients
- Achieved an average 'overall satisfaction' rating from clients of 99.3%

Improving Access

- Introduced a diagnostic 'gateway interview' system across the service which has significantly reduced waiting times and increased the numbers of people that can be either immediately assisted or referred to appropriate services
- Substantially improved our Telephone Advice Line service and introduced Information Sessions and Information Kiosks

Targeted Projects

- Run 11 successful advice projects meeting the needs of BMER groups, people with health problems, disabilities, mental health needs and young families
- Attracted fixed term and continuing funding from 8 new sources of funding

Social Policy

- Sent evidence to Citizens Advice to help positively influence social policy in 1,161 cases and held a successful Social Policy Open Day in Uxbridge

Volunteers and Training

- Recruited, trained and deployed 129 volunteers and introduced student work placements from Brunel University
- Maintained a diverse volunteer base that reflects the local community and can provide advice to the public in various community languages

Working in Partnership

- Maintained a successful pro bono rota (established by HECA in 2005) with the participation of the key specialist advice providers in Hillingdon ensuring a 'seamless service' for clients in pursuing their cases most effectively
- Started to deliver financial capability sessions and training as an active member of the West London Financial Capability Forum

3. Where we are now in April 2009

HECA's services at April 2009 consisted of a core generalist service provided from three bureaux in Hillingdon and five projects. (Appendix 1 gives details of staffing).

a. The Core Generalist CAB Service

The services provided by the Uxbridge, Hayes and Ruislip bureaux are:

- Personal advice by appointment throughout the week
- A "drop-in" reception service, which provides diagnostic interviews, appointment booking, and signposting to other services where applicable
- Telephone advice
- Information sessions
- Referrals to pro bono solicitors running sessions at the bureaux and in their own premises
- Referrals to HECA's bureau-based and outreach projects as appropriate

b. Outreach and Bureau-based projects

As at April 2009 these are:

- Money Advice for Hillingdon Homes Tenants
- Money Advice as part of the Mortgage Rescue Scheme
- Mental Health Outreach Advice Service
- GP Outreach Advice Service
- Children's Centres Outreach Advice Service

c. Our funders

Funders who have confirmed funding for our services in 2009-10 include:

- London Borough of Hillingdon
- Hillingdon Homes
- Hillingdon Primary Care Trust
- Hillingdon Community Trust

4. The External Environment and Context of our Work

Like many organisations, the environment we work in is constantly changing, for example: the demographics and needs of the clients we serve; the priorities of the local authority and other funders, the impact of national strategies, targets, legislation and the state of the economy.

We undertake annual reviews of our performance, community advice needs and the various opportunities and threats that face our organisation.

Our review at the beginning of 2009 confirmed that whilst the demographics of our clients shows that we are reaching all sections of the community and is little changed the enquiry issues presented to us are escalating and changing markedly (in a predictable fashion) as the economic recession in the UK progresses.

Outlined below are our key strategic objectives that we aim to achieve over the next three years to provide a wider range of services for the community we serve alongside a wider range of partners.

5. Our Strategy for 2009-12

Our strategy is set in terms of five key interlinking themes:

- a) Responding to the increasing needs of Hillingdon residents for advice brought about by the local impact of the economic recession**
- b) Increasing and widening access to advice and information generally**
- c) Service development**
- d) People development**
- e) Partnerships**

Notes

- *Appropriate annual targets for each of these themes are set out in the full Strategic Business Development Plan. Performance against the targets will be reviewed at the start of each financial year.*
- *Key Actions for each forthcoming year will be set as part of the Annual Review process when changes in the operating context have been assessed.*
- *The full Strategic Business Development Plan contains a detailed Client and Community Profile, Community Advice Needs Analysis, Review and Analysis of Performance and a Resources Strategy including contingency measures.*

6. Key actions in 2009-10

a) Responding to the increasing needs of Hillingdon residents for advice brought about by the local impact of the economic recession

- Recruit and train additional paid and volunteer staff
- Increase bureaux open times and capacity
- Increase the Telephone Advice Line service delivery

b) Increasing and widening access to advice and information generally

- Improve access to self-help information via technology
- Improve access to the Telephone Advice Line service
- Introduce on-line referrals for vulnerable/excluded clients

c) Service development

- Maintain and expand outreach advice as funding opportunities allow
- Diversify the roles available to volunteer staff
- Introduce new bureau-based services as funding opportunities allow
- Build up a track record in delivering financial capability services

d) People development

- Increase our in-house capacity to induct, train and mentor new staff and volunteers
- Provide timely training in response to changes in advice enquiry issues (e.g. debt, housing and employment)
- Develop financial capability skills in identified staff and volunteers
- Increase IT skills levels of our staff and volunteers

e) Partnerships

- Maintain our key relationships with the specialist level advice providers in the borough of Hillingdon and our funders
- Develop relationships with partners with an interest in financial capability
- Develop relationships with partners with an interest in outreach advice
- Develop relationships with smaller organisations with an interest in referring vulnerable clients likely to experience difficulty accessing advice

7. Where we want to be in 2012

It is by no means clear whether the economic recession that is having an impact on the lives of people in Hillingdon (and Ealing) at the start of 2009 will still be a significant factor in 2012. However, HECA will aim to sustain any increase in the size of its operations as there have been substantial unmet needs for advice in the area for many years and it will be of great benefit to the community to do so.

In 2012 we aim to be:

- Acknowledged not only as a provider of high quality advice and information but of responsive, accessible, innovative and value for money services;
- Widely recognised by all sections of the community as the 'first port of call' for all general advice and information needs;
- A valued partner of the local statutory agencies for the quality of our social policy evidence and its contribution to the improvement of services;
- A valued partner of local non-statutory agencies with an interest in advice, financial capability and social policy;
- An organisation with experience of delivering effective financial capability services, well placed to participate in any major initiatives in this area;
- Recognised as a provider of valuable training that, in itself, contributes to the skills, confidence and employability of its recipients;
- An attractive volunteering option with diverse, interesting and rewarding roles available that are likely to appeal to a wide range of people;
- Recognised as an organisation that is making a positive contribution to equality, diversity and community cohesion through all its activities.

For further information on how we will deliver our strategy, please refer to our Strategic Business Development Plan or contact Heather Brown, Director, at hbrown@hillingdoncab.org.uk.

Appendix 1: Organisational Chart April 2009



