



Executive
15 July 2013

**Report from
Strategy, Partnerships and Improvement**

For Action

Wards Affected: All

Advice and Guidance Review

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 In January 2012 Executive agreed to create an Advice and Guidance Stream within the Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund out of the existing advice budgets and some of the larger grants in the Main Programme Grant which have been paid over a number of years. Executive extended existing arrangements to facilitate a review of present service provision with a view to medium term funding arrangements for the services. This paper sets out the review and findings. Future funding for advice and guidance is proposed to make the best use of the resource critical to the resilience of local communities as they adjust to change. The review has taken longer than anticipated due to a number of local issues identified when reviewing existing services, shifting local need and the changing national context affecting advice, particularly legal advice.

2.0 Recommendations

Executive is asked to:

- 2.1 Note the key findings from the review of service provision in the newly formed advice and guidance stream during 2012/2013 set out in section 3 of the report and summarised at paragraph 3.12.
- 2.2 Note that existing arrangements for most projects in the advice and guidance funding stream were rolled over on 1st April 2013, due to the review of existing arrangements taking longer than expected and pending a decision from Executive on future provision in light of the review. (See 2.6 for the exception)

Executive is asked, within existing budgets set out in section 5, to:

- 2.3 Agree to delegate to Assistant Director – Policy the renegotiation of a Service Level Agreement with Brent Community Law Centre for the provision of specialist legal advice until 31st March 2015 as set out in paragraph 3.33.
- 2.4 Agree to delegate to Assistant Director – Policy the renegotiation of a Service Level Agreement with Brent Citizen's Advice Bureau for the provision of generalist legal advice until 31st March 2015 as set out in paragraph 3.33.

- 2.5 Agree to extend the council's existing grant agreements with Age UK and Brent Mencap until 31st March 2014 as set out in paragraph 3.35.
- 2.6 Note that Brent Association of Disabled People has encountered some governance and financial difficulties which are affecting the everyday running of the organisation and the council has worked with BADP to investigate these. Regrettably, the council is not in a position to continue to fund the organisation to provide advice and guidance for disabled people in the borough at this time.
- 2.7 Agree to commission a new consolidated advice and guidance service level agreement providing advice and guidance to both elderly and disabled people from 1st April 2014 until 31st March 2015, with option to extend for a further year, subject to the 2014 Executive decision on future advice provision (as set out in paragraph 3.36).
- 2.8 Agree to seek interim provision of advice and guidance for disabled people in the borough to replace that which cannot be provided by the Brent Association for Disabled People, until the new arrangement proposed in 2.7 is in place.
- 2.9 Agree to extend existing arrangements for private sector tenant engagement provided by Brent Private Tenants Rights Group until 31st March 2014, giving notice that the council does not intend to fund this particular project after that time.
- 2.10 Note the intention to manage the monitoring of this grant as part of the themed grants stream during this period and no longer include it as part of the Advice and Guidance stream.
- 2.11 Agree to reallocate the £33,228.98 presently allocated on the tenant engagement project to Housing Need Team in Regeneration and Growth to commission work to address private sector housing issues from 1st April 2014 (as set out in paragraphs 3.30, 3.31 and 3.38).
- 2.12 Note the specific proposals (set out in paragraph 3.10) already agreed by members for ward working projects which respond to welfare reforms including work with disabled and elderly people, private tenants and debt benefits advice, including budgeting in light of the need identified during the review.
- 2.13 Note the plans to work with the Adult Social Care Department and local organisations to map out local services available for disabled and elderly in the borough to ensure better cross agency working and referral pathways between advice provision and other services.
- 2.14 Note the intention to bring the advice services to Executive in 2014 for further consideration, in light of the local government settlement and its impact.

3.0 Detailed Considerations

The scope of the review

- 3.1 In January 2012 the Executive established an Advice and Guidance Stream and sought a review of the existing provision with a view to medium term agreements for future provision. The review was concerned with the specialist and generalist legal advice provided to residents, generalist advice offered to disabled and older people and the provision of an umbrella organisation to represent and advise people with disabilities in the borough. An on going arrangement for tenant engagement was also considered. The scope of the Advice and Guidance Stream was shaped by a number of factors including a mitigation of the potential equality impact of other changes to the Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund themed grant funding at that time. The Equality Impact Assessment identified the need for the advice and guidance stream to ensure an appropriate focus on support for disabled and older people. Since then, the Council has agreed two rounds of Voluntary Sector Themed Grant funding

and the most up to date picture of the people benefitting from the Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund is set out below. It is also portrayed in greater detail in the appended Equality Impact Assessment.

- 3.2 The review included an assessment of the changing needs of residents and local contextual factors. It considered the findings from an earlier peer review of legal advice provision funded by the council prior to the creation of the Advice and Guidance Stream in January 2012. The review also included consultation responses from the community and providers about the Advice and Guidance Stream. Existing service provision was subject to on site assessment and review of present provision and outcomes. Options for future models of service were considered and ways for services to align better explored.

Context and local need

- 3.3 Brent's population of 311,000, is not only larger than previously estimated, it is set to continue to grow based on current birth and migration trends. Whilst not all areas of the borough experience poverty, Brent as a whole is the 35th most deprived borough in the country, up from 85th. 14% of people in the borough state in the 2011 census that their day to day activities are limited by poor health and 8.5% state they provide unpaid care for someone. 1.9% state they provide 50 hours or more unpaid care. 10.5% population are over 65. One in three households includes a child living in poverty. A low wage economy, growing unemployment for the working age population, particularly young people, and continued low adult skills levels limit peoples' ability to secure available employment opportunities within London. The national economic context is placing an incredible strain on Brent's communities. Welfare reform in particular means that people are even more reliant on securing and sustaining well paid jobs to overcome the reduced ability to afford to live within the borough, as changes to benefits and low wage jobs combined mean some can no longer pay the bills. At the end of 2012/2013 the council had identified that 2030 people expected to be affected by the overall benefit cap, 2,200 by the size criteria, 21,000 affected by council tax support changes and 46,636 affected by universal credit. The rise in pay day loan shops in the borough and numbers turning to the local food bank for food offer local indicators of the impact of this context for some residents. Advice services are an integral part of the fabric of society for local residents seeking to care for themselves and their families in this context. Residents are already seeking support from our main providers in response to welfare reform and the impact of the global financial context and more are expected to follow.
- 3.4 The advice services and projects set out in this report engage approximately 50,000 people in the borough each year with equality monitoring data highlighting a proportion of BME ethnic groups above that seen in the borough population, 19.5% aged over 60 and 26.5% stating they have a disability. Slightly more men than women presently benefit. Data about the legal advice services shows that people making use of the service are predominantly 35-49 year olds from the most deprived neighbourhoods in the borough. Fewer residents living in the north of the borough seek advice than the south. Usage is high and the main categories of law accessed are housing, welfare benefits and debt across both agencies closely followed by employment and immigration

Local views

- 3.5 Consultation with the local community when developing the Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund included specific questions about the future advice and guidance funding stream. 71% of organisations consulted either agreed or strongly agreed with the Advice and Guidance funding proposal. Respondents identified that the context of cuts in benefits and services, implementation of universal credit, rising unemployment and higher risk of homelessness pointed to a need for advice and guidance. Groups particularly identified as having particular need for advice and guidance included: people with disabilities, older people, carers, refugees and people with English as a second language, and BME communities.

- 3.6 Local providers identified a range of areas for potential development based on feedback from users:
- extend existing services with longer or different opening hours and offer support to those with locally identified needs, not covered by legal aid, including aspects of debt, welfare and employment advice
 - ensure services are able to be responsive to changing local need – notably welfare advice, debt and income maximisation, options for people who can no longer afford to pay local rents with changes to benefits, repossessions from mortgages
 - expand the telephone services and improve online services
 - Target provision further through outreach at churches community centres, GP services, courts, home visits and for homeless, 16-24, families with under 5s, older people
 - Improve coordination of local service provision with better informed referrals, closer work and sharing of resources between agencies
 - Enhance future financial planning to meet the need to diversify funding streams and ensure there is effective support for local organisations improve and work together better
 - More structured ways to respond to new arrivals to the borough seeking to access local services and those individuals with no recourse to public funds

Summary of Present Provision

- 3.7 The Council has provided funding to enable independent legal advice for residents for many years. The Council has also repeatedly grant funded advice and guidance for people with disabilities and older people through Main Programme Grant and decided in January 2012 to include this in the advice and guidance funding stream of the Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund.
- 3.8 The 2012/2013 Advice and Guidance Stream agreed by the Executive in January 2012 consists of:
- Specialist legal advice (£183,346)
 - Generalist legal advice (£359,428)
 - Projects which offer advice and guidance for disabled people and older people (£142,494)
 - An umbrella representative body for people with disabilities in the borough (£159,380)
- 3.9 The regularly renewed service level agreements and grant agreements covered by the review appear to have been set up to align with housing and social care objectives in the first instance when managed by the then Housing and Community Care department. A review of activities undertaken by the different providers illustrates a broader alignment to strategic objectives with legal advice at the heart of building a stronger community and enabling community resilience as people seek to ensure the best for themselves and their families. The specialist advice for elderly and disabled also aligns to drivers for health and well being looking at early intervention as well as community resilience.

Other Advice Services

- 3.10 A look at other similar services funded by different parts of the council highlighted that in addition to the advice offer covered by the Advice and Guidance stream of the Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund, there are some targeted advice services funded by different parts of the council:
- The Early Years Service has a contract with CAB, at a cost of £175,608 a year. This contract is being reviewed in 2013-14. The option of aligning commissioning of this with the Advice and Guidance Stream has been considered with the procurement lead for this area of work and the head of service and several factors mean that this is not considered the preferred route.

- Housing Needs Team (Welfare Reform Mitigation) is funding a joint post with CAB, at a cost of £50,000 for one year. The SLA for this post is currently being finalised.
- Members agreed for ward working to commission a number of voluntary organisations to deliver specific projects at a ward level across a number of wards specifically responding to welfare reform including advice for older people and disabled people, debt, benefit and budgeting advice, private tenants advice and supporting existing organisations working to support residents affected by the welfare reforms to expand.

3.11 An additional legal advice service is being provided independently of Council funding in libraries. 'Instant Law' is a service which operates at Brent Town Hall library and Willesden Green library by means of free online access. Service users can arrange a free thirty minute consultation with a solicitor (via phone or video conference) for advice within the areas listed below. Service users pay to receive on-going legal services beyond the initial consultation. Areas of law include; Family Law, Employment Law, Landlord and Tenant Law, and Immigration Law.

Findings

3.12 The review highlighted the following areas for improvement:

a) Future funding agreements need to reflect the shifts in local need

The review found areas of service provision in need of improvement, mainly as a result of older grant agreements or service level agreements reflecting previous contexts. During 2012 the likely impact of changes in national policy on welfare began to be quantified and shifts in the types of advice sought began to be identified. Future service provision needs to reflect the changing demographic and rising needs. In particular advice agencies need to relate more closely to local agencies administering welfare support for local residents, particularly in dealing with clients with higher levels of need than in the past.

b) The changes to the scope for local aid need to be recognised

A local 'legal services consortium' which includes a number of the organisations funded through Advice and Guidance stream has been successful in securing funding from the Advice Transition Fund to address (in the short term) the loss of income from nationally funded legal aid. Including all categories of advice in future agreements would enable the best flexibility to deal with a very challenging situation for local residents seeking support. In addition there needs to be a rebalancing of the mix of telephone advice and face to face support, so that the most vulnerable are supported when they need face to face support and the wider advice through other communication channels is maximised to enhance value for money. The changes to legal aid signify a shift in the legal advice services marketplace and this needs to be recognised in future commissioning of these services.

c) Local services need to align better

Providers of advice need to work more closely together to enhance what they each offer and how they avoid duplication. The use of volunteers already evident could be enhanced. Further opportunities to improve IT enabled services would also be important. Work to seek transition funding as a consortium should be built upon for future endeavours and the groups utilised as a source of engagement with the council. Use of independent support for building and enhancing local services via CVS Brent should also be pursued further in the development of new business models and collaboration opportunities to provide more stability for future service delivery.

d) Funding needs to be structured more efficiently

The arrangements for advice and guidance for disabled and elderly people need to be consolidated. Consistent agreements and monitoring arrangements need to be in place for the whole of the advice and guidance stream, so that the agreements clearly explain expected

outcomes and measures. The agreements should also include clarity on ways to negotiate changes throughout the funding period to enable flexibility to respond to a rapidly changing policy environment.

e) The council and advice providers need to work more closely

To ensure a better understanding of what government changes mean and their likely and actual impact, there needs to be better engagement between providers and the council. Providers need to be able to engage with policy development more effectively with the provision of information to enhance the borough wide understanding of key advice sought by residents. The initial drive to enable advice agencies to influence policy development with provision of information about local experiences should be strengthened and encompassed in future agreements.

The review also highlighted some particular anecdotal feedback including the gradual increase in the cases of angry or upset members of the public accessing advice services where increased security has been required. There has been a rise in the numbers receiving food bank vouchers and in the number of people with no recourse to public funds seeking support.

Borough provision of Advice and Guidance has also been referenced in the Early Help Aligned Services Strategy report as part of the One Council 'Working with Families' project. Here the advice and guidance covered by this review is identified as potential referral route for some of the support to families engaged with through the 'working with families' suite of projects. These referral pathways need to be included in any future agreements.

f) Measurement of outcomes and performance management needs to be improved

Cases and users need to be logged separately. Common measures should be used to enable comparison where this is appropriate. Performance targets and outcome measures need to be captured consistently.

g) Accommodation

All of the providers discussed their accommodation plans, the opportunities for colocation were explored but no firm options were identified.

h) Advice for disabled people

During the review some governance and financial difficulties at BADP were identified. The response to these difficulties needs to be reflected in the recommendations.

Detail on review of legal advice funded

3.13 The total budget in 2012/2013 for legal advice was £542,774. This consists of provision of generalist legal advice provided by Citizens Advice Bureau at an annual cost of £359,428 and specialist legal advice provided by Brent Community Law Centre at an annual cost of £183,346. A 2012 assessment of London borough legal advice funding levels shows that many London boroughs are funding at a similar or higher level to Brent.

3.14 The strategic alignment to corporate priorities centres on building a stronger community – with the core funding to the organisation enabling the organisation to secure other funding to offer a range of advice including debt and financial planning. Regular referrals to the Foodbank and signposting to other specialist centres including those within the advice and guidance stream funded by the council also show how the work of the organisation features at the heart of supporting those in extreme difficulty and gives us an indicator of the impact of welfare reform. Increasing instances of people who have not been treated appropriately by local employers e.g. loss of employment as a result of maternity leave or being laid off without appropriate notice sit alongside a rise in people in debt and using loan sharks or high interest high street loan shops as common issues encountered by Brent Citizens Advice Bureau. Private sector housing cases and clients slipping between agencies also feature as equally serious issues for a range of providers.

Brent CAB

- 3.15 Brent Citizens Advice provide generalist legal advice for residents at a cost of £359,428 a year. The organisation states through its monitoring that it supports approximately 24,000 people. The CAB's generalist legal advice and information service covers the following categories: Consumer; Money Advice; Welfare Benefits; Employment; Housing; Family and Personal Matters; Taxes; Immigration and nationality; Health and Education. The CAB delivers its services to all residents in the borough as follows:-
- a telephone advice line available within specified operating hours
 - an 'advice surgery' for drop-in sessions without an appointment
 - a drop-in general help service (such as for assistance with completing forms and the provision of relevant information leaflets)
 - an appointment service for more complex or detailed cases, this includes a partnership arrangement for the Mortgage Rescue Scheme
- 3.16 The lapsed service level agreement funds 6 full time equivalent posts and some running costs. The service operates from rented premises in Willesden High Road with customers accessing services at the bureau. Customers are assessed through a gateway assessment interview system and signposted accordingly to the most appropriate services, this can range from help with form filling; initial diagnostic appointment or a more detailed casework appointment is offered. The bureau offer a telephone advice service within specified operating hours and in response to customer and Council feedback, the bureau has reallocated more resources to front line face to face activity. Brent CAB no longer holds a legal aid contract but BCLC and BPTRG have secured legal aid contracts to deliver specialist advice at the Bureau premises.
- 3.17 Accessibility has been mainly through telephone and face to face. Feedback on accessibility indicated a much greater demand in the mornings compared to afternoons and evenings, there was a limited desire for sessions on Saturdays. Welfare, money, housing and employment are the top factors the bureau is contacted about. Recent surveys by the organisation indicate very high levels of customer satisfaction. Complaints levels are low. On site visits provided a clear indication of quality advice and support for local residents with good processes which could be developed further over time through the use of IT to further support the high volumes of people who access the service. The organisation meets the governance, policy and finance assessments undertaken. The CAB has also secured grant funding from the council to provide a training and volunteer programme for long term unemployed people, with a number expected to secure paid employment as a result.

Brent Community Law Centre

- 3.18 Brent Community Law Centre provides specialist legal advice at a cost of £183,346. The organisation states in its monitoring that it supports 5,000 clients via advice line, plus 1,000 people funded through the other funding streams. The BCLC's specialist legal and information advice service covers the following categories of law: Consumer Debt; Welfare Benefits; Housing; Immigration; Education; Mental Health; Community Care; Public Law and Education. The service is delivered to all residents living or working in the borough. The BCLC provides a specialist legal advice and information service to people working and living within the borough as follows:
- a legal advice telephone line together with a further ("second tier") legal advice line as needed
 - a pre-planned appointment service, this includes the partnership arrangement for the Mortgage Rescue Scheme (low take up on this)
 - working with the Council on policy issues, in particular using client experiences to inform and influence the policy and delivery of local services
 - participation in local advice networks, such as providing legal information at classes or community meetings
 - the preparation of information pamphlets or other media on topical legal issues

- 3.19 The lapsed service level agreement funds the posts 4.37 full time equivalent posts and a contribution towards running costs. The structure of the organisation is in the process of being revised. The BCLC service operates from BCLC owned premises in Willesden High Road. Initial point of access is through the specialist telephone advice service. Customers are given advice and aided to assist themselves through the telephone advice service. In multi-faceted complex cases, customers will be offered an appointment to see a specialist legal adviser. All the services until recently were delivered by qualified solicitors. However, in response to the constant pace of change the BCLC has reviewed these services, this as resulted in the BCLC recruiting a number of legally qualified caseworkers. The BCLC also intends to engage more actively with volunteers and has begun to provide face to face drop in sessions in the near future. The BCLC currently holds a legal aid contract covering Community Care, Public Law, Housing, and Immigration. Employment, debt and welfare benefits categories are no longer being funded through a legal aid contract with BCLC.
- 3.20 Accessibility has been mainly through the telephone and face to face with the service level agreement paying mainly for a telephone line but the face to face access developed over time to respond to local need. Feedback on accessibility indicated a much greater demand in the mornings compared to afternoons and evenings, there was a limited desire for sessions on Saturdays. The last customer satisfaction ratings captured were high. Complaints levels are low. The law centre has a long tradition of championing local issues. New management has supported the development of improvements to processes and medium term vision of the organisation. The site visits highlighted careful and skilled phone advisers covering a range of legal issues and ensuring appointments for those issues which cannot be dealt with through the first phone call. The systems for logging issues and the monitoring are complex. Amending the councils monitoring requirements would assist with this. Improvements to the IT systems operated by the organisation would enhance efficiency and the ready availability of appropriate management information. The organisation meets the main governance, policy and financial assessments undertaken, with a couple of points of clarification outstanding.
- 3.21 The drive to secure funding and operate a young people's law centre is something which has captured interest elsewhere in London and could be beneficial to the borough.

Main Findings

- 3.22 The most common categories of legal advice provided by Brent CAB and BCLC are housing, welfare benefits, debt, employment and immigration. The following are in the national scope of legal aid from 1st April 2013: Clinical Negligence, Debt, Discrimination, Education (SEN), Family, Housing, Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme, Immigration and Asylum, Mediation, Welfare Benefits and Other. The national scope of what is covered under the legal aid categories is changing significantly and this will mean that many of the key areas of concern for local residents can no longer be pursued through legal aid. A national telephone service offers some legal advice for some areas of advice now. There has been a significant reduction in the level of legal cases funded by central government in Brent. The main local providers state there is a reduction of approximately 40% compared to last year. The changes to legal aid change the structure of funding for legal advice agencies, which had used council funding as a match to the legal aid cases allocated to the borough. Funding from the council does enables legal advice agencies to cover some of their core costs and thus attract funding from elsewhere for other projects. The providers have secured resource from other funders to offer advice in a range of areas for Brent residents. All of the providers are now working to get transition funding to address some of the loss initially and look at ways to streamline their service to enable more to be available at the front line. They are also looking at the possibility of charging for some services. The loss of the debt welfare and employment advice locally through this national funding stream is of particular concern given the cases coming through the doors as a result of changes to other national service provision.

- 3.23 The Regeneration and Growth and Children and Families Departments and the multi agency welfare reform group identified the loss of legal aid in these areas as significant. Present providers emphasised the need for any future service level agreements to cover the whole range of legal categories to enable the best flexibility in what can continue to be offered to local people. It was recognised in the review that it was not possible for the council to address the impact of the changes to legal aid made by central government. However better use of IT would mean that some volunteer resources could be better utilised. The rise in numbers seeking support and unable to get support as quickly as they would like remains a challenge. Changes to council monitoring requirements would benefit future arrangements. Performance measures with set targets are limited and dated, with regular measures of inputs and outputs minus targets making up the majority of what is collected for the lapsed SLAs at present.

Detail on Generalist Advice and Support funded for people with disabilities and Older People

Advice and Guidance

- 3.24 Brent Mencap provides generalist and specialist advice with a focus on provision of social activities for older people and for people with a learning disability (and carers) at a cost of £52,020 a year. The organisation states through its monitoring that it reaches approximately 4000 people and supports approximately 800 people through this project. The review highlighted good quality service provision and championing of disabled people. The organisation met the governance, policy and main financial assessment criteria. The organisation is responding to changes to some of its funding streams in the last few months. Grant agreement requirements did not include as many advice elements as others in the advice and guidance stream.
- 3.25 Age UK Brent provides generalist and specialist advice services for older people via telephone, home visits and outreach surgeries at a cost of £90,474 a year. Activities include information and advice to older people and their carers, welfare benefits and advocacy for older people, especially from BME and refugee communities, volunteering in the Borough to provide services to older people and campaigning on behalf of older people. The organisation states through its monitoring that it supports approximately 5000 people through this project. The organisation met the governance, policy and main financial assessment criteria. The organisation is responding to changes to some of its funding streams in the last few months. The review highlighted a well positioned set of services and measurable outcomes expected from the agreement, all be it a need to reshape the outcomes of any future arrangement to be fully focussed on advice and guidance activity.
- 3.26 Adult Social Care feedback identified scope for formalising feedback into customer journey work and support of encouraging and enabling access to online services for more elderly and disabled people seeking services as an outcome from any future advice provision to these client groups.

Umbrella organisation to represent disabled people

- 3.27 Brent Association of Disabled People (BADP) was funded to act as the umbrella organisation to support and represent disabled adults in the borough at a cost of £159,380 during 2012/2013. The activities covered by the grant agreement include core costs, welfare rights advice, debt and housing advice and general advice for disabled people. The organisation states through its monitoring that it contacts approximately 8000 people through regular newsletters, with smaller numbers receiving advice and guidance directly. More recently BADP has hosted the BASIS lottery funded project. An umbrella organisation of this sort is present in many London boroughs although a number have ceased to be funded by the local authority or only receive some funding from their local authority.
- 3.28 The level of grant funding allocated to this project requires more specific and measureable outcomes than those presently detailed in the grant agreement. Adult Social Care professionals asked have made some use of the service in the past. The grant agreement does not cover the provision of advocacy and Adult Social Care has commissioned an advocacy service for vulnerable individuals in the last year. The service does not support children and young people and the children and families

department have an advocacy service and other local providers they refer children and young people to for support around advocacy or general advice about disability. The nature of the advice provided is often more related to welfare than it is to adult social care services.

- 3.29 Under the previous procedures for grant monitoring, this project was monitored annually. Quarterly monitoring visits put in place for 2012/2013 have gathered basic information about what the organisation delivers. The grant bid and associated agreement need updating to reflect the present context and local need. The site visits earlier in the year highlighted a steady stream of appointments with disabled people being offered both adequate and good advice. The performance information provided by the organisation highlights a number of areas for improvement to processes. The organisation claims a high rate of success at tribunals to overturn assessment of disabled people for benefits by DWP. The review and other individuals identified some governance and financial difficulties at BADP. The council has worked with BADP to investigate these. The council is not assured of the organisation's governance and financial standing at this time and regretfully has to seek a decision on alternative provision as set out in paragraphs 3.34-3.37.

Private Tenant Engagement

- 3.30 The review also considered a lapsed SLA with Brent Private Tenants Rights Group (BPTRG) costing £33,228.98 a year. This had previously ensured private sector tenant engagement and it is not advice and guidance which is funded. A transitional arrangement was put in place in 2012/2013 whilst the review was being undertaken to enable some collation of data regarding present activities. Monitoring identified a need for strengthened outputs and outcomes to be sought for any future project of this sort and better data collection and evidence of outreach. The organisation meets the governance, policy and financial criteria. The organisation has also been successful in obtaining grant funding for a project entitled 'healthy homes' under the Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund 2013-2016.
- 3.31 The review highlighted issues with the scope and activities sought from the original agreement and concluded that these are no longer considered appropriate to the context and local need. Regeneration and Major Projects were consulted as part of the review. The council has alternative routes to engage with private sector tenant issues and the numbers and range of private sector tenants reached through the present arrangement are relatively low. The council has a formally constituted forum to consult on private rented sector issues and development of this vehicle in future will enhance the council's engagement with private sector tenants and landlords further. The council is reviewing their strategy regarding private sector housing and commissioning a feasibility study for additional licensing and other measures to improve the quality of private sector stock and management of the stock by landlords. The council is also looking at more self service materials for private sector tenants to access on line. The council is seeking to focus on addressing the quality and supply of private sector housing in Brent as a priority and these factors should be considered in any future recommendations. It should also be noted that the council is presently carrying out a procurement exercise regarding a related but different service which benefits private sector tenants - the Council's Tenancy Relations Service following a submission of interest from Brent Private Tenants Rights Group.

Proposed Approach

Legal Advice

- 3.32 These services are even more important to local people in the context of increasing poverty and challenges following welfare reform, because despite the scope for each of the legal aid categories changing, many will still be in the 'crisis' situations. Funding from the council is essential for the continued ability of advice agencies to secure other funding to support services like debt advice. Reducing funding would be detrimental to not only to what the council delivers as more of our clients are referred to these agencies, but any other funding secured by advice agencies to address issues which are identified as priorities for the council in response to welfare reform. The ability to refer

people from the 'Working with Families' suite of projects needs to be included in any future service level agreement.

- 3.33 Procurement options were considered and given the strength of present providers with clear added value for money in additional benefit for Brent residents secured through the arrangements, the negotiation of a further SLA with the existing providers with an up to date service specification was deemed most appropriate in the first instance. It is recommended that the SLA with Brent CAB is renegotiated and generalist legal advice funded until March 2015 at a cost of £359, 428 a year. It is recommended that the SLA with Brent Community Law Centre is renegotiated and specialist legal advice funded until March 2015 at a cost of £183, 346 a year. These are the same annual amounts which they were receiving in the previous financial year. It is recommended that these service level agreements are renegotiated to include all categories of legal advice, including aspects within the legal aid scope until now. The balance of telephone and face to face advice should be reconsidered in these SLAs to enable both good access to the limited advice resources, and good outcomes for residents in most need. It should be noted that given the changes to the legal aid market, and the limits on extending arrangements, any future funding of legal advice after March 2015, should be the result of recommissioning to secure best value. The intention is to bring a paper to Executive in 2014 to get agreement on next steps.

Provision of advice for older people and disabled people

- 3.34 The provision of the advice and guidance element should have broader alignment with a range of health and well being priorities. Adult Social Care are seeking the inclusion of a requirement to feed into customer journey work and improvements of online services for older and disabled people, alongside any general advice provided in new funding agreements. The ability to refer people from the 'Working with Families' suite of projects also needs to be included in any future service level agreement. This fits well with the response in the review from present providers that they would be keen to enhance their role as critical friend to maximise the representation of these cohort of residents alongside any role as provider of service. The Brent Connects Equality, Brent Connects Disability and Brent Connects Pensioners Forums should act as critical friends to this service.
- 3.35 It is recommended that the existing grant agreement with Age UK Brent is extended until March 2014 at a cost of £90,474 and the existing grant agreement with Brent Mencap is extended until March 2014 at a cost of £52,020, which is the same annual amount they were receiving in the previous financial year.
- 3.36 It is also recommended that a new consolidated advice and guidance service is commissioned providing advice and guidance to both elderly and disabled people from 1st April 2014 until 31st March 2015 at a cost of £142,494, with option to extend for a further year at the same cost, subject to the 2014 Executive decision on future advice provision.
- 3.37 It is recommended that the function of an umbrella organisation for disabled people offering specialist advice on disability issues should be funded through an SLA with clear measurable outcomes from advice and clear referral pathways which take into account the national changes to the legal aid system. As the council is no longer assured that the present provider meets the criteria to be funded by the council at this time, an interim arrangement should be put in place at a maximum cost of £159,000 a year, and the function included in the commissioning set out in 3.36 above, making the total budget £301,494.

Private Sector Tenant Engagement

- 3.38 This arrangement should be continued until the end of the year, subject to the provision of appropriate monitoring information. The transitional funding agreement should be administered and performance managed in line with other Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund grant funded projects during that time. After that the funding should be reinvested by Regeneration and Major Projects to commission work to address private sector housing issues.

Cross cutting issues

- 3.39 Regular engagement between advice agencies and council officers and partner agencies needs to be established for clarity on the way in which any changes in policy are being implemented, and improve the ability to address issues which arise as a result of greater pressure on public finances on families in Brent. Better referral pathways between council run services and those run by advice agencies funded by the council also need to be included in future agreements. Agreements need to be reviewed on an annual basis during the agreed period so that outcomes and measures can be updated as required to better reflect the changing context; enhancing the relationship between provision by different agencies in the borough.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 Taking into account the findings of the review members are asked to agree to implement the recommendations set out in section 2 to enhance the provision of advice and guidance in the borough.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund has a total of £2,076,457. This includes funding for infrastructure support, themed grant funding and advice and guidance funding. This report is concerned with the arrangements for advice and guidance funding. The proposals can be delivered within existing budgets and are in line with the previous Executive decision on this funding stream in January 2012. The private tenant engagement proposal results in the removal of the funding for the project from the Advice and Guidance Stream so the fund is reduced by £33,229
- 5.2 The proposals recommend the following allocation of funding:

Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund

Cost Item	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Themed Grants Stream			
Themed Grants 2012 -2015	241,261	241,902	0
Themed Grants 2013 - 2016	311,924	318,958	320,481
Small Grants	59,643	52,609	51,086
Other	78,019	77,378	TBA
Infrastructure Stream	159,249	159,249	TBA
Advice and Guidance Stream	850,645	850,645	TBA
Specialist Legal Advice	183,346	183,346	TBA
Generalist Legal Advice	359,428	359,428	TBA
Advice and Guidance – disabled and older people	301,874	301,874	TBA
Other	5,997	5,997	TBA
Tenant Engagement Project	33,229	0	0
London Councils Contribution	342,487	342,487	TBA
TOTAL	2,076,457	2,043,228	

Advice and Guidance Stream

Provision	Organisation	Cost 2013/2014	Cost 2014/2015
Specialist Legal Advice	Brent Community Law Centre	183,346	183,346
Generalist Legal Advice	Brent Citizen's Advice Centre	359,428	359,428
Advice and Guidance – disabled and elderly	TBC 2013-2014	159,380	301,874
	Age UK Brent	90,474	
	Brent Mencap	52,020	
	Combined Provision 2014-2015 TBC		
Other		5,997	5,997
Total		850,645	850,645

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 The Council has powers under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 and under the general power of competence under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to make grants to voluntary organisations and to provide financial assistance for the provision of advice services to the public of the sort provided by the CAB and the BCLC.
- 6.2 The decision to award a grant is discretionary. The Council's discretion must not be fettered by previous commitments they may have given and it should make its decision in the light of present circumstances.
- 6.3 The Council is bound to act reasonably and must take into account relevant considerations and to ignore irrelevant considerations and should consider its fiduciary duty towards local taxpayers.

- 6.4 Best Value authorities are under a general Duty of Best Value under section 3(2) of the Local Government Act 1999 to “make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.”
- 6.5 Under the Duty of Best Value, the Department of Communities and Local Government recommends in its Guidance (which is mentioned in the next paragraph) that local authorities should consider overall value, including economic, environmental and social value, when reviewing service provision. As a concept, social value is about seeking to maximise the additional benefit that can be created by procuring or commissioning goods and services, above and beyond the benefit of merely the goods and services themselves.
- 6.6 In September 2011, the Government circulated Best Value Statutory Guidance (“the Guidance”) for consultation. According to that Guidance, local authorities should be sensitive to the benefits and needs of voluntary and community sector organisations and should seek to avoid passing on disproportionate cuts. The Guidance also advises that a local authority intending to reduce or end grant funding or other support to a voluntary or community organisation that will materially threaten the viability of the organisation or service it provides should give at least three months’ notice to both the organisation involved and the public/service users. The Guidance also advises that a local authority should actively engage the organisation as early as possible on the future of the service, any knock-on effect on assets used to provide this service and the wider impact both on service users and the local community. The Guidance also advises that where appropriate, local authorities should make provision for an affected organisation or wider community to put forward options on how to reshape the service or project and local authorities should assist this by making available all appropriate information.
- 6.7 In respect of the changes to the legal aid system, legal aid / public funding will only be available in housing law cases where there is serious disrepair or homelessness, possession proceedings and for anti-social behaviour cases in the county court. There will be no legal aid for debt cases save for those cases in which there is an immediate risk to the home. The majority of immigration work will no longer be covered by legal aid, except for those in immigration detention or cases involving torture or claims under the Refugee Convention. Legal aid will only be available for education cases in relation to special educational needs cases. There will no longer be legal aid for welfare cases except for appeals to the upper tribunal or higher courts. There will no longer be legal aid available for employment law cases except for cases which involve a contravention of the Equality Act 2010 or if the claim arises in relation to the exploitation of an individual who is a victim of human trafficking. Legal aid will remain available for public family law cases (such as adoption). However it will only be available for private family law cases (such as contact or divorce) if there is evidence of domestic violence or child abuse and child abduction cases.
- 6.8 The public sector equality duty is set out at Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. It requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have ‘due regard’ to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimization and other conduct prohibited under the Act, and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a ‘protected characteristic’ and those who do not share that protected characteristic. A ‘protected characteristic’ is defined in the Act as:
- age;
 - disability;
 - gender reassignment;
 - pregnancy and maternity;
 - race;(including ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality)
 - religion or belief;
 - sex;
 - sexual orientation.
- Marriage and civil partnership are also a protected characteristic for the purposes of the duty to eliminate discrimination.

- 6.9 Having due regard to the need to ‘advance equality of opportunity’ between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not includes having due regard to the need to remove or minimize disadvantages suffered by them. Due regard must also be had to the need to take steps to meet the needs of such persons where those needs are different from persons who do not have that characteristic, and encourage those who have a protected characteristic to participate in public life. The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons include steps to take account of the persons’ disabilities. Having due regard to ‘fostering good relations’ involves having due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding. Complying with the duty may involve treating some people better than others, as far as that is allowed by the discrimination law. It will be the duty of the decision maker, i.e. the Executive, to give the appropriate due regard to its duties under the Equality Act 2010.
- 6.10 Direct discrimination occurs if, because of a protected characteristic, a local authority treats a person less favourably than it treats or would treat others. Indirect discrimination occurs if a local authority applies the same provision, criterion or practice to everyone, but it puts those in a certain protected group at a “particular disadvantage” when compared with persons who are not in that protected group. Even if a “particular disadvantage” arises, indirect discrimination does not arise if the provision, criterion or practice can be justified – i.e. if it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
- 6.11 The Council must pay due regard to any obvious risk of such discrimination arising in respect of the decision before them. At Brent, these matters are examined in the Equality Analysis. Due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality, and foster good relations must form an integral part of the decision making process. The Council must consider the effect that implementing a particular policy will have in relation to equality before making a decision.
- 6.12 There is no prescribed manner in which the equality duty must be exercised. However, the council must have an adequate evidence base for its decision making. This can be achieved by gathering details and statistics on who uses the service. A careful consideration of this assessment is one of the key ways in which the Council can show “due regard” to the relevant matters. Where it is apparent from the analysis of the information that the proposals would have an adverse effect on equality then adjustments should be made to avoid that effect (mitigation).
- 6.13 The duty is not to achieve the objectives or take the steps set out in s.149. Rather, the duty on public authorities is to bring these important objectives relating to discrimination into consideration when carrying out its functions. “Due regard” means the regard that is appropriate in all the particular circumstances in which the authority is carrying out its functions.
- 6.14 There must be a proper regard for the goals set out in s.149. At the same time, the council must also pay regard to any countervailing factors, which it is proper and reasonable for them to consider. Budgetary pressures, economics and practical factors will often be important, which are brought together in the Equality Analysis. The weight of these countervailing factors in the decision making process is a matter for the Council in the first instance.

7. Equality Implications

- 7.1 Equality analysis informed the development of recommendations arising from the review and the attached Equality Impact Assessment document sets out the implications of the recommendations. With the exception of ceasing the private sector tenant engagement project no adverse impact has been identified for the nine groups with protected characteristics under the Equality Act. Overall the equality impact of the proposals is considered as positive in ensuring targeted support for the disabled and elderly and a range of advice services to support vulnerable people in the borough.

- 7.2 The potential adverse impact of Brent Association of Disabled People no longer providing a service is also considered and mitigated with the proposed provision of both alternative interim and replacement services.
- 7.3 The potential adverse impact of decommissioning the tenant engagement project (which is not advice and guidance) has been considered with available data and options for mitigation provided to address this. Mitigation includes the Brent Connects Private Sector Housing Forum and further development of this forum; area specific 'Brent Connects' Forums across the borough where residents can raise issues of concern and more self service materials for private sector tenants provided by the council online. The recommendations propose commissioning further work to address private sector housing issues, many of which are the key concerns of those engaged through the tenant engagement project. Additional mitigation is found in a greater focus on support to address the issues affecting private sector tenants including generalist advice services in the borough, housing team work, the healthy homes project led by Brent Private Tenants Rights Group under the themed grant funding stream of the Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund. The present procurement process being carrying out by the council for the tenancy relations service is also noted.

8. Appendices

Appendix 1: Equality Impact Assessment

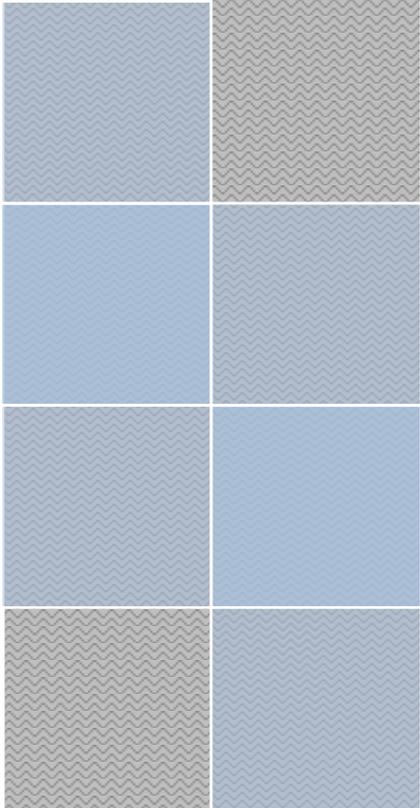
9. Background Documents

- Borough Plan
- Borough Plan Refresh
- Health and Well Being Strategy
- Working with Families Aligned Service recommendations
- Children and Families Plan
- Legal Services Commission changes to legal aid scope
- Peer Review Feedback 2011
- Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund Consultation 2011
- Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund Executive Report January 2012
- Provider interviews
- Notes of service area feedback
- Site Visit Reports 2012/2013
- Monitoring documentation 2012/2013
- Grant Agreements and SLAs
- Financial Assessments of accounts
- Organisational policies
- Minutes of Welfare Reform Meetings

Joanna McCormick, Partnerships Coordinator
Cathy Tyson, Assistant Director – Policy



Equality Analysis



Brent Council Equality Analysis Form

Please contact the Corporate Diversity team before completing this form. The form is to be used for both predictive Equality Analysis and any reviews of existing policies and practices that may be carried out.

Once you have completed this form, please forward to the Corporate Diversity Team for auditing. Make sure you allow sufficient time for this.

<p>Directorate: Strategy, Partnerships and Improvement</p> <p>Service Area: Corporate Policy Team</p>	<p>Person Responsible: Name: Joanna McCormick Title: Partnerships Coordinator Contact No: 0208 937 1608 Signed:</p>
<p>Name of policy: Advice and Guidance Stream Review – Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund</p>	<p>Date analysis started: April 2012</p> <p>Completion date: March 2013</p> <p>Review date: March 2014</p>
<p>Is the policy: New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Old <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Auditing Details: Name: Eoin Quiry Title: Senior Practitioner (Diversity) Date 18.04.13 Contact No: 0208 937 1623</p> <p>Signed: </p>
<p>Signing Off Manager: responsible for review and monitoring Name: Cathy Tyson Title: Assistant Director, Policy Date: April 2013 Contact No: 0208 937 1045 Signed:</p>	<p>Decision Maker: Name individual /group/meeting/ committee: Executive</p> <p>Date: July 2013</p>

2. Brief description of the policy. Describe the aim and purpose of the policy, what needs or duties is it designed to meet? How does it differ from any existing policy or practice in this area? Please refer to stage 2 of the guidance.

In January 2012, the Executive decided to create a Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund from the former Main Programme Grant and Advice budgets. The review and equality analysis undertaken at that time led to the creation of an Advice and Guidance stream within the Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund.

It was identified that the stream would include significant elements which would benefit people with a disability and some elderly people.

During 2012/2013 the Service Level Agreements and grant funded projects within the Advice and Guidance Stream were reviewed to identify better proposals for future advice and guidance provision. These services include generalist and specialist provision for older people and people with disabilities, as well as legal services provision for all residents.

The review has been completed and the following is proposed:

- To renegotiate Service Level Agreements with Brent Community Law Centre for the provision of specialist legal advice and Brent Citizen's Advice Bureau provision of generalist legal advice until March 2015.
- To extend the existing grant agreements with Age UK and Brent Mencap for the provision of advice and guidance for disabled and some elderly people until end of March 2014
- To secure an interim service to replace the grant funded project to provide an umbrella body to represent disabled people in the borough and offer advice and guidance until the end of March 2014.
- Seek new bids for a consolidated advice and guidance for disabled and some elderly people for 2014/2015, incorporating all of funding for advice and guidance for people with disabilities and older people. Include the option to extend for a second year subject to 2014 advice funding decisions.
- To extend existing arrangements for private sector tenant engagement provided by Brent Private Tenants Rights Group until 31st March 2014, giving notice that the council does not intend to fund this particular project after that time.
- To reallocate the funding spent on tenant engagement to commission a project/s to address private sector housing issues in the borough

3. Describe how the policy will impact on all of the protected groups. What evidence have you relied on to reach these conclusions?

Projects currently funded through voluntary sector grants impact on protected characteristics in the following way:

Age – There is a relatively small proportion of people benefiting from projects in the Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund who are aged over 60.

In contrast, approximately 34% of the total funding in the Advice and Guidance funding stream is going to projects where the beneficiaries are aged over 60.

Of the total number of beneficiaries in the Advice and Guidance funding stream, 19.5% are aged over 60.

This is in context with the Borough average where 14.5% of the population is aged over 60.

Disability –Of the total beneficiaries of the Voluntary Sector initiative Funding, 19% are disabled people.

In contrast, 46% of the total funding amount in the Advice and Guidance funding stream is going to projects where the beneficiaries are disabled people.

Of the total number of beneficiaries in the Advice and Guidance funding stream, 26.5% are disabled.

This is in context with the Borough average where 15.6% of the population is registered as disabled.

Some organisations have a higher than average proportion of disabled people benefiting from the project they are running, such as Brent Mencap.

Race – 71% of the funding in the Advice and Guidance stream is benefiting people from a Black or Ethnic Minority (BME) background, which is above the proportion of people from BME backgrounds in the borough population (59%).

Gender – 48% of funding is benefiting females, a slightly lower proportion than that in the borough population (49.8%).

No data is presently held for religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity for nearly all organisations presently funded. Organisations presently providing advice report anecdotally that there are only a few cases now and again which are concerned particularly with religion, sexual orientation or gender reassignment. Again anecdotally, there have been a series of cases of employment advice being sought following staff losing jobs after taking maternity leave and this issue has been pursued by the local organisations with further advice for local employers on the legal position. The organisations are tracking cases of this sort so there is an understanding of numbers who benefit from the service on the basis of this protected characteristic.

The policy will have a positive impact on protected groups.

In securing provision for both specialist and non-specialist the Advice and Guidance Stream support in the 4 areas listed above, the policy ensures that there is:

- (i) Widespread positive impact on all protected groups; particularly in terms of legal services provision.
- (ii) Targeted positive impact on specific protected groups (such as the elderly and disabled).

The overall Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund including the Advice and Guidance Stream enables the inclusion of all protected groups and also supports vulnerable groups which would be underrepresented otherwise.

Please give details of the evidence you have used:

The equality monitoring by organizations funded to deliver against Service level agreements and grant agreements was used to assess impact. Snapshots of the population as a whole was used as a benchmark along side evidence of local need identified through Brent Data Statistics responses from residents and local providers of services who were involved in the peer review or subsequent review of existing provision and changed welfare context.

- Consultation responses on the development of Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund including the Advice and Guidance Stream
- Census data (ONS, NOMIS)
- Service Provider self-assessment data (service user statistics)
- Brent borough profile for demographic data (needs assessment)
- Equality monitoring data and guidelines
- Previous reports produced relating to the same user group

4. Describe how the policy will impact on the Council's duty to have due regard to the need to:

(a) Eliminate discrimination (including indirect discrimination), harassment and victimisation;

- The funding of advice and guidance as proposed will ensure that groups subject to discrimination can seek support either through legal advice or through advice tailored specifically to their protected characteristic – disability or age.

(b) Advance equality of opportunity;

- Provide practical support to protected groups (e.g. debt management).
- Provide additional advice and guidance to protected groups.
- Enable service users to improve their access to mainstream services.

(c) Foster good relations

- Multi-agency support and training
- Facilitate service user communications and awareness of support available.
- Updated outcomes and improved referral routes to these services will enable better engagement between those individuals advised and the wider community.

5. What engagement activity did you carry out as part of your assessment? Who did you engage with? What methods did you use? What did you find out? How have you used the information gathered? How has it affected your policy? Please refer to stage 3 of the guidance.

The assessment began drawing on consultation responses to the creation of the Advice and Guidance Stream within the Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund, and customer feedback on legal advice services.

The assessment was developed further on the basis of quantitative data about the demography of the borough in conjunction with equality monitoring data provided by the organisations running presently funded projects. Each group provided equality information about the people who benefit from projects they run and this has been used to make a qualitative judgement.

These projects were agreed upon before the Equality Act 2010 came in and the monitoring covered race, gender, disability and age but not pregnancy, maternity and gender reassignment. Only some organisations provided information on religion and sexual orientation and the data was not comprehensive enough to analyse. Each project was considered separately in relation to each equality strand and then the collective themes and strands were also analysed.

6. Have you identified a negative impact on any protected group, or identified any unmet needs/requirements that affect specific protected groups? If so, explain what actions you have undertaken, including consideration of any alternative proposals, to lessen or negate this impact. Please refer to stage 2, 3 & 4 of the guidance.

Most of the recommendations facilitate positive impacts for groups of people with protected characteristics. We only identified potential negative impacts for protected groups in relation to one recommendation, which is set out below. In terms of the protected characteristics the following was identified

Age – The fund is now more consolidated and the proposal for aligned advice services will ensure a focus on elderly people, particularly those with a disability. When looking at the Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund as a whole, it is clear that any potential adverse impact for elderly people identified in the 2012 equality analysis for the fund as a whole is mitigated by the implementation of the recommendations for this stream alongside the shift in the people benefiting from the Voluntary Sector Initiative themed grant projects, which in more recent rounds have included more elderly people as beneficiaries.

Disability – Funding has become more consolidated and the proposed alignment of services ensures that the potential adverse impact identified in the 2012 equality analysis is mitigated. The 2012 analysis was one of the key factors in the creation of the Advice and Guidance stream. The equality analysis highlights that people with a disability will be positively impacted by the continued provision through the Advice and Guidance Stream and that across the Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund as a whole, the Advice and Guidance stream balances out the slight under representation of disabled people in other grant funded projects.

Race - Grant funding has consistently benefitted a range of BME communities. The fund as a whole and the advice and guidance stream has a positive impact on people from BME backgrounds with a slightly higher percentage than that seen in the general population accessing the services presently funded. When reviewing the areas of the borough receiving this advice, there is a correlation with deprivation levels and associated poverty which explains this finding.

Gender - There is a slighter lower proportion (48%) of females when compared to the Borough average of 50% who are accessing advice and guidance services in the borough.

No data is presently held for religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity for nearly all organisations presently funded. The Corporate Diversity team has begun work with organisations to try to improve monitoring for all of the funded projects within the Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund.

Tenant engagement proposal

The review also considered a lapsed SLA with Brent Private Tenants Rights Group (BPTRG) costing £33,228.98 a year. This had previously led private sector tenant engagement and it is not advice and guidance which is funded. The proposal to cease funding the tenant engagement project at the end of March 2014 has the following potential impact:

There are over 33,000 (Census 2011) households within the borough who are renting private accommodation. Of these, the estimated figures provided by the organisation for numbers of people engaged through the tenant engagement project make up approximately 1.5% with a large proportion being older people.

The potential impact will be mitigated through the Private Sector Housing Forum and area specific 'Brent Connects' Forums across the borough where residents can raise issues of concern. Also, private sector tenants will be able to access other generalist advice services in the borough.

Alternative support for concerns identified by private sector tenants is also available for residents in private sector housing through housing teams, the tenancy relations service (currently going through a procurement process) and a healthy homes project led by Brent Private Tenants Rights Group under the themed grant funding stream of the Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund. Private sector tenants are engaged through case work support rather than the broader engagement of private sector tenants on cross cutting issues.

The recommendations propose commissioning work to address private sector housing issues, many of which are the key concerns of those engaged through the tenant engagement project. This also offers a form of mitigation.

Brent Association of Disabled People

As the council is not in a position to continue to fund BADP, there is a potential impact on people with a disability in the first instance. The report proposes putting in an alternative service in place as an interim measure and then to look at a consolidated service of advice and guidance for disabled and elderly from April 2014.

Please give details of the evidence you have used:

Please see data listed in section 3 and evidence of engagement listed in section 5.

7. Analysis summary

Please tick boxes to summarise the findings of your analysis.

Protected Group	Positive impact	Adverse impact	Neutral
Age	√		
Disability	√		
Gender re-assignment			√
Marriage and civil partnership			√
Pregnancy and maternity			√
Race	√		
Religion or belief			√
Sex	√		
Sexual orientation			√

8. The Findings of your Analysis

Please complete whichever of the following sections is appropriate (one only). Please refer to stage 4 of the guidance.

Adjust the policy

This may involve making changes to the policy to remove barriers or to better advance equality. It can mean introducing measures to mitigate the potential adverse effect on a particular protected group(s).

Remember that it is lawful under the Equality Act to treat people differently in some circumstances, where there is a need for it. It is both lawful and a requirement of the public sector equality duty to consider if there is a need to treat disabled people differently, including more favourable treatment where necessary.

If you have identified mitigating measures that would remove a negative impact, please detail those measures below.

Please document below the reasons for your conclusion, the information that you used to make this decision and how you plan to adjust the policy.

To mitigate the potential impact of the Brent Association of Disabled People no longer being in a position to deliver the project, the report proposes that the council secures an interim service until the end of March 2014 and in the meantime seeks consolidated advice and support services for people with disabilities and older people to begin in April 2014.

To mitigate for any impact of ceasing to fund the Tenant Engagement Project after March 2014, in addition to the existing provision of generalist advice through organisations like Citizens Advice Bureau and the housing team at Brent Council, there will be numerous opportunities for private tenants to raise issues of concerns through housing forums such as the Private Sector Housing Forum and the ward specific Brent Connects Forums. A further commissioned project looking at private sector housing issues will seek to respond to some of the key points identified by private sector tenants through tenant engagement.

The proposals outlined above adjust the policy to respond to changes in need and organisational circumstance.

9. Monitoring and review

Please provide details of how you intend to monitor the policy in the future. Please refer to stage 7 of the guidance.

The voluntary sector is engaged and consulted with through the voluntary sector liaison forum. In addition, the development of a new CVS offers the ideal opportunity to communicate across the range of organisations which make up Brent’s voluntary sector.

Future monitoring will take place in the following way:

- Corporate Officer Group to monitor progress of Council-funded projects.
- Updated bidding documentation.
- Updated monitoring forms for project returns which cover all protected characteristics in the Equality Act and emphasize the action being taken to tackle any adverse impact identified.
- Quality monitoring of contracts
- Specific equalities measures

10. Action plan and outcomes

At Brent, we want to make sure that our equality monitoring and analysis results in positive outcomes for our colleagues and customers.

Use the table below to record any actions we plan to take to address inequality, barriers or opportunities identified in this analysis.

Action	By when	Lead officer	Desired outcome	Date completed	Actual outcome