

Community Advice Strategy Group

Terms of Reference: 29.9.06

1. Aim

The aim of the Community Advice Strategy Group is to develop a network of quality marked providers of advice & legal services delivering accessible services to local communities based on an effective assessment of local needs.

2. Objectives

To further this aim, the Group will:

- a) Regularly monitor and evaluate the need for advice and information
- b) Develop quality suppliers to meet need
- c) Develop co-ordinated funding,
- d) Produce a 3 year strategic plan and monitor its progress

3. Area of Interest

The Community Advice Strategy Group will cover people using services within the boundary of Blackpool Council.

4. Membership of the Group

The maximum number of members permitted to be on the Group will be 20.
The Group will consist of invited and elected members: -

Invited members will be

A senior Member of Blackpool Council.	1
a senior Officer of Blackpool Council.	1
a representative from the Legal Services Commission	1
at least two Funders	2 plus
a representative of Blackpool Law Society	1
a representative of the Primary Care Trust	1
at least two community representatives: one of which should represent the issues of equality of access	2 plus
up to four others as considered appropriate by the Group.	4
Total	13 plus

Elected members will be:

Six representatives of the providers elected by the Advice Network, including at least one representative of:

Blackpool Council's services	1
Private practice solicitors	1
Not for profit agencies	1
Information level providers not covered by the groups above	1
Other	1
Other	1
TOTAL	6

Elections are to be held every 2 years

5. Roles and Responsibilities

- a) The Local Strategic Partnership and the Local Authority will jointly ensure that appropriate structures and servicing arrangements are in place for implementation and monitoring of the work of the Community Advice Strategy Group.
- b) All Members of the Group are expected to actively contribute to the strategic work of the Community Advice Strategy Group. They will share responsibility for its effectiveness.
- c) Members who do not attend for 3 consecutive Group meetings or more than half of such meetings in any 12-month period, without good reason, may be removed from the Group. Such decisions will be at the discretion of the chair.
- d) The Advice Link Network will be informed annually of the attendance of their representatives.
- e) Members are expected to promote early dispute resolution through the use of mediation where appropriate.
- f) Membership may also be withdrawn if members behave in ways that are not conducive to the effective working of the Group. Such decisions shall be at the discretion of the group.

8. Conflict of interest

- a) All members must declare any conflict of interest that might directly benefit themselves, their organisation or an organisation with which they have a connection.
- b) The Chair will rule on appropriate action in the event of any conflict of interest being declared or becoming apparent.

9. Chair of Group

- a) A Senior Member from the Local Authority will normally be the Chair. Blackpool Council will nominate the chair.

- b) The Group will elect a Vice-chair. The vice-chair will not be a representative of the Council or of the Local Strategic Partnership
- c) Decisions required outside of the cycle of Group meetings will be made by the chair or, if she or he is not available, the vice-chair in consultation with at least 3 other member of the group, one of whom needs to be a representative of the Council, and be reported to the next full Group meeting.

10. Quorum & Decisions

- a) The Group will be quorate if at least **4** of the members currently serving are present including one representative from each of the following:
 - Blackpool Council
 - The Providers' group
- b) If voting is required, each member shall have one vote. Each member or their nominating body may appoint a proxy. In the event of a tie the Chair has the casting vote.

11. Secretarial Support

- a) The Local Authority and the Local Strategic Partnership will agree the level of servicing they can provide to the Community Advice Strategy Group to enable it to carry out its work. Other members may be called upon to assist from time to time.
- b) The Local Strategic Partnership and the Local Authority will jointly take primary responsibility for the production of the Strategic Plan, in full consultation with the Group, who will approve the final document prior to publication.

12. Meetings

- a) Group meetings will be held as often as deemed necessary by the group subject to a minimum of 4 meetings a year.
- b) Meetings and events will be held in premises that are accessible to people with mobility needs. Arrangements will be made ensure that all members can take a full part in discussion and voting at Group meetings.
- c) Dates of meetings will normally be scheduled at least 2 months in advance.
- d) Meetings can be called by the chair after consultation with Blackpool Council and a representative of the advice providers.

14. Monitoring Arrangements

- a) The Group will:
 - report as required to the Local Strategic Partnership.
 - produce a plan of work, which will be reviewed and revised on a regular basis.

17. Status of these terms

The group will review these terms of reference at least annually.