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Justice Minister's report shows Government is adding to pressures on legal advice services

AdviceUK has welcomed the publication today of Ministry of Justice's *Study of Legal Advice at Local Level*, which reveals the pressures that the recession and Government policies are placing on social welfare advice agencies.

With the recession heightening demand for independent advice on debt, benefits and housing, it is vital that Lord Bach acts on the problems that he has listened to from advice providers.

He has heard that heavy handed legal aid reforms and procurement strategies implemented by the Legal Services Commission are hampering many advice agencies and threatening community based provision. As predicted by many providers, new fixed fees for legal advice have changed adviser behavior and placed the burden of new bureaucracy and financial risk on them. The procurement of advice 'super-centres', known as CLACs, are threatening diverse and community-based advice centres. The costly upheaval of these reforms has done little if anything to improve services for people in need of advice.

Phil Jew, Head of Policy & Campaigns at AdviceUK said:

"We are pleased that Lord Bach is committed to acting on real problems with advice provision and seems to understand that the solutions lie in working with advice providers. The clumsy, top-down approach of recent years must stop. In these times of great need the priority should be to support community based, trusted and accessible advice agencies to continue and to expand their advice services."

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Notes to editors

1. AdviceUK is a charity supporting community organisations that give free advice to members of the public. Established in 1979, AdviceUK is the largest network of independent advice agencies in the UK. Our members work in some of the poorest parts of the UK, helping people to solve legal and social welfare problems. Together, our members provide access to advice for over 2 million people a year. www.adviceuk.org.uk
2. Study of Legal Advice at Local Level is available from the [Ministry of Justice](#)