

Breaking the Mould: Commissioning Advice Services in Portsmouth

1. Introduction

About AdviceUK

AdviceUK is a charity supporting community organisations that give free advice to members of the public. AdviceUK members work in some of the poorest parts of the UK, helping people to solve legal and social welfare problems, for example, with debt, benefits or housing. Many also offer wider community services, such as skills training, employment services, or healthy-living activities. AdviceUK's 800 members are a trusted source of practical help and support that over 2 million people a year turn to when things go wrong.

AdviceUK's role is to support members to improve the quality and effectiveness of their services and to provide a national voice. Since 2008, AdviceUK has worked with Vanguard Consulting, supporting advice providers and local authorities to better understand demand for advice and the pressures faced by advice services from a system perspective. In 2011, AdviceUK was commissioned by Portsmouth City Council to support a review of advice provision and the commissioning of the city's independent advice service.

Portsmouth City Council

Despite Portsmouth's attractive waterfront location in one of the UK's wealthiest regions, the city has pockets of deprivation that are amongst the worst in the country. The city's anti-poverty strategy, *Tackling Poverty in Portsmouth: A strategy for the city*¹ has been informed by a comprehensive needs assessment, which identified a number of factors that contribute to poverty in the city, and which impact on demand for advice:

- Fuel poverty
- Financial exclusion
- Debt
- Benefits
- Employment & worklessness
- Educational attainment
- Adult learning & skills
- Digital exclusion
- Health inequalities.

2. Background

National perspective

Advice organisations currently find themselves facing overwhelming pressures from a number of sources. The financial crisis of 2008 and subsequent recessions have had a dramatic impact on most sectors of UK society, with falling living standards, increased unemployment and under-employment, and the most radical shake-up of the welfare state

since its foundation. These changes have serious consequences for people, especially those who are poor, marginalised or vulnerable, millions of whom turn to advice services every year.

Consequently, demand for advice has risen to record levels in recent years. In 2011, 78% of AdviceUK members reported increased demand of 10% or higher in the previous 12 months. Research for the Money Advice Trust² showed that in 2009, some 1.62 million people sought debt advice from a voluntary advice service, an increase of 350,000 on the previous year, and that every 1% increase in unemployment is associated with an additional 60,000 debt enquiries per quarter. Demand far outstrips supply: research published by the Legal Services Research Council in 2010³ found that 36% of the UK population had a civil justice problem but fewer than half of them managed to access advice.

At the same time, pressure on funding for advice has increased. Whilst many local authorities, the primary funders of local advice services, have sought to protect advice funding, falling revenues have inevitably meant cuts for advice. 95% of AdviceUK members reported average cuts of £34,000 in 2011 and were anticipating worse to follow. 70% were cutting services. The removal from Legal Aid of most social welfare law problems in 2013 will put further pressure on the limited capacity of the sector to meet demand.

In the face of these challenges, nothing short of a radical re-evaluation of the purpose, design and resourcing of advice is required, centred on the needs of the people who use the service. AdviceUK argues that doing things better is no longer good enough, and advocates a different future for advice services, building on the unique role its members play in communities, providing creative solutions to changing need – advice needs to learn to do better things.

History of Advice Services in Portsmouth

For many years Portsmouth City Council (PCC) invested in a generalist advice service provided by Portsmouth Citizens Advice Bureau (PCAB) who had worked in the city since 1939. The You Trust (formerly known as Southern Focus Trust, which was set up in the city in 1984 to provide care and support services to local people) delivered some specialist advice. Additionally PCC's own in house service provided money advice to council tenants. The Legal Services Commission also purchased advice in the city covering a range of specialist advice funded through the civil legal aid budget and delivered through a mix of solicitors firms and not for profit advice agencies.

Feedback from service users and PCC's own assessment of the situation indicated that advice and money advice in the city was fragmented and inadequate.

The Legal Services Commission at that time invested something in the region of £430,000 in specialist advice work and the City Council had a budget of £300,000 from a variety of service areas.

Development of Portsmouth Community Legal Advice Centre (CLAC)

The Legal Services Commission approached the city council as a potential partner with their vision of delivering a better co-ordinated service through their plans for Community Legal

Advice Networks or Centres. This was a new model, untested, and launched at the same time as the commission introduced a new unified contract for the provision of legal aid services which changed the way legal matters were funded.

In October 2006, PCC's Executive gave approval for the development of the new approach to Community Legal Advice in the city, optimistic this would provide a more comprehensive service. Following approval the council issued an invitation to tender in September 2007 and there followed a full procurement process. The contract was awarded to You Trust with the Portsmouth Citizens Advice Bureau (PCAB) as their sub contractor. The You Trust would in the main deliver specialist advice funded largely by LSC, manage the centre and PCAB would deliver the generalist advice. The contract was duly signed and following a concerted effort by all parties the centre opened on 1st April 2008.

The CLAC delivered advice in the following areas of social welfare law:

- Family
- Debt
- Employment
- Housing
- Welfare Benefit
- Court Desk
- Community Care.

Data collected by the CLAC showed the consistent high demand for debt and benefit enquiries, far in excess of the other categories of law. Throughout the duration of the contract it became clear that restrictions imposed through legally aided services did not enable the service to respond effectively to demand in these two areas. Despite the providers presenting several models that they felt could work, procurement regulations were found to be a barrier to change, as the proposed level of variation was felt to risk legal challenge. In October 2010 the Legal Services Commission decided to develop plans independently to run specialist advice in the city.

Lessons Learnt from the CLAC model

1. The CLAC included a procedure that timed interviews, with a gateway which was brief and often necessitated a further appointment. This approach proved to be too much of a "straitjacket" for many and led to long waiting times, repeated appointments and too much emphasis on record keeping.
2. Reception initially depended on a volunteer workforce but it was soon learnt that this didn't work effectively and the volunteers were replaced with paid staff that could assess the level of response needed by the client and offer a more consistent approach (however volunteers continued to play a valuable role as advisers and in other roles in the centre).
3. A range of service delivery options was needed, which might include face-to-face, telephone, outreach and web based systems.
4. Less emphasis was needed on recording data and more action toward achieving outcomes for individuals, with flexibility in the availability of the service.

3. Reviewing advice services in Portsmouth – the way forward

Portsmouth City Council was keen to ensure that the dissolution of the CLAC didn't result in a return to the fragmented services the city had experienced previously. Interim arrangements were put in place for 1st April 2011 with the intention to follow a full procurement exercise for services to be delivered from 1st April 2012. The interim arrangements continued to rely on the collaboration between The You Trust and Portsmouth Citizens Advice Bureau, operating under the name Portsmouth Advice Centre.

Commissioners in Portsmouth City Council then established a significant review of the service. They wanted to study the service from a customer perspective in order to understand more about the outcomes people valued, and to generate the insights needed to ultimately commission a more effective advice service. This would mean analysing the service from a customer perspective, using the Vanguard Method for Systems Thinking, an approach which had previously been successfully used in the council's Housing Service.

The Vanguard Method for Systems Thinking

Vanguard Consulting was founded by Professor John Seddon, translating influences such as the work of W Edwards Deming and the quality manufacturing approach developed by Toyota, for use in the service sector. Vanguard principles recognise that service organisations are radically different from the manufacturing organisations of the nineteenth century, from which many underlying assumptions about how work should be organised were formed. The people who use service organisations are not passive consumers of standard products, but present a variety of needs and demands. Vanguard's work has shown consistently how industrial-style "efficiency" measures, such as separating work into functional specialisms or merging back office functions, fail to cope with this variety, resulting in unhappy customers whose needs are not met, and waste, failure and unnecessary cost.

The Vanguard Method starts with finding out about demand for the service "outside-in" – that is in customers' own terms. Understanding demand enables the service to define its true purpose as customers see it and to focus its resources on delivering exactly and only what matters to them. With a clear purpose, a service can identify how much of the demand it has to deal with is 'value demand' and how much is preventable or 'failure demand'. Value demand is what the service exists to do. Failure demand is the result of something not being done, or not done right, for a customer. Failure demand can be internally generated, for example having to call to find out why a promised follow-up has not been done, or external failure, when another organisation's failures cause people to seek help. As we shall see, a high proportion of the problems experienced by people who use advice services emanate from the state or commercial sector.

The Vanguard Method in the Advice Sector

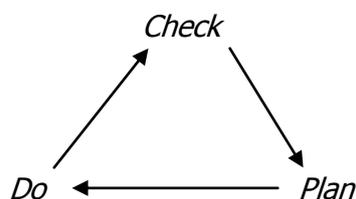
In 2008, AdviceUK and Vanguard undertook initial high-level research in Oxford and Powys,⁴ which demonstrated a number of issues that cause unnecessary waste for advice organisations.

- Significant levels of the demand for advice are the direct result of other services failing to get something right for their customers. The administration of welfare benefits is a major source of preventable demand;
- Advice organisations have become constrained by the shift in recent years from grant funding to procurement. The quest for “best value” has led commissioners to use tightly defined service specifications and activity-based output targets; and
- Targets drive the wrong behaviours, leading to pressure to ‘make the numbers’ and to close cases quickly, which in turn encourages cherry-picking of easier cases and a revolving-door for clients whose problems are never fully resolved.

AdviceUK subsequently supported advice agencies and the local authority in Nottingham to review advice demand and provision. This work demonstrated that public service failures caused one third of the demand coming in to the city’s advice organisations. As part of the work, advice centres and the authority’s Housing Benefit service worked together to redefine a shared purpose based on an understanding of customer demand, and to re-design the services to better achieve the new purpose. During the pilot phase of this new approach, waiting times for benefit payments reduced radically from 100 days to 23 and ultimately to 5 days, with the result that the relationship has now been extended.

Using Vanguard Method in Portsmouth

The Vanguard Method provides a structured approach to continuous improvement, that involves learning about demand and how work is organised (Check), experimenting with new ways of doing things (Plan) and making what works normal (Do). Learning and improvement become a key part of everyone’s job and the cycle continues.



Check begins with learning in the work and so, in Portsmouth, Check Team members spent time in the advice service’s reception, listening to and writing down what people said as they came into the service. Recording clients’ verbatim demands (i.e. what the customer asks for, in their own words) helps understand the demand they place on the service in their own terms. Services are typically designed around categories that the service or funders dictate, for example the area of law in which advice is offered, or levels of intervention, such as specialist or generalist. However, people and their problems rarely come packaged in this way, and shoe-horning them into our definitions gets in the way of hearing what really matters to them.

The team listened to around 400 demands in reception over a period of weeks and sat in on dozens of interviews to deepen their understanding. As well as recording demand, team members also spent time chatting informally with clients as they waited to be seen, to ask what was important to them about the service, and, as they left, to rate how well the

service had delivered what mattered to them. Coming together regularly to talk about what they were learning gave the Check Team time to really think about what people needed and the purpose of the service.

What did we learn?

Demand

- There were distinct levels of demand: “I just need the information/tools to solve my problem myself (42%); “I need help/support to solve my problem” (36%) and “Sort my problem out for me” (24%).
- Around 2/3 of people were first-time users of the service and around 2/3 of these had heard about it from friends or family or by walking past.
- 29% had tried to get advice somewhere else first, over 35% of them at a government department.
- 54% of people had access to the internet, and just under half of the people coming to the service had tried but failed to resolve their problem online.
- The highest frequency problems related to benefits, debt and housing.

Preventable demand

Almost half of all demand was preventable, mostly caused by other services:

Agency	% of all Preventable Demand	Preventable Demand as % of all Demand on Advice Services
Job Centre Plus	25%	8%
Pension Service	10%	3%
Disability & Carers Service	5%	1.5%
Social Fund	10%	3%
HMRC	10%	3%
Other	25%	8%

What mattered to people?

- For 34% of people using the service, it was important that the service was quick and convenient.
- 24% said ‘that I get the advice I need to solve my problem’.
- 13% wanted the service to do something on their behalf. In many cases people felt they were banging their head against a brick wall trying to deal with officialdom.
- There were a number of aspects to how the service was delivered that mattered, notably that people felt they were treated well, the facilities at the centre and being able to see someone face-to-face.
- A smaller proportion (4%) said they wanted to be helped to help themselves.

Accessing the service

- Demand for the service was high, though fluctuating between 205 and 345 each week. Because of this, measures had been put in place to manage the queue, which had consequences for clients' experience.
- Clients had to follow 12 steps before they actually saw an adviser. The average wait was 69 minutes, but could be much longer.
- Because of the waiting times, around 1/3 of clients abandoned the service before they were seen. We subsequently learned that this created a 'bow-wave' of people queuing to get in first thing the following morning, distorting the actual levels of demand.

Developing understanding as commissioners

The commissioning team also wanted to understand whether the advice centre processes actually supported workers in delivering what users needed; or whether they could be changed to help users have a smoother journey through to other parts of the advice and social support system, and vice versa. As part of the systems analysis, they gained information about other services people in debt frequently access, such as housing, the job centre and benefits support, and the impact these services had on the demand and issues presenting at the advice centre. As part of this process, they were also able to talk to other agencies, such as benefits services, about flaws in their processes which meant that people were presenting at the advice centre unnecessarily. For example, a significant proportion of work being dealt with was as a result of benefits claims which had been incorrectly processed or had been delayed.

One of the Portsmouth team's realisations from this review, was that the existing data they held on the centre only helped them understand the number of people processed – the outputs from the service – and very little about the quality of services or what users really valued.

Portsmouth City Council knew they had to generate new data about what was and wasn't working for customers accessing the advice centre, and about what was causing demand. To really get inside the customer perspective, the commissioning team spent significant time in the advice centre itself, observing the daily interaction of people using and working in the centre, from which they were able to discern the different types of support people were looking for and the routes to and from other parts of the system.

"Often when you talk to people about 'hearing the user voice' they get very wrapped up in things like service user satisfaction surveys, but the thing that is really interesting in this is that the bulk of it is about observation, and just listening to people who are using the service. I just found that really interesting. For example, we wanted to map the customer journey, from when they stepped through the front door, to getting to the reception desk, to seeing an adviser. So we literally camped out on the reception desk and listened to more than 200 different approaches from

customers, writing down what people were saying or asking for in their own words. It was actually much more difficult than we thought because the tendency is to interpret what we think people need, rather than focusing on what they are actually saying or asking for."

(Member of the review team)

One immediate insight from this research was that the service was not particularly effective at dealing with the complexity of some people's situations. A system that 'tagged' users according to individual categories was not helpful in helping people who came in with multiple needs, seeking support with everything from electricity payments to benefits advice. Another discovery was just how much demand in the system was built up from people not getting the advice that they needed when they first asked for it, regardless of agency, or the amount of demand from people struggling to understand their benefit claims or access information.

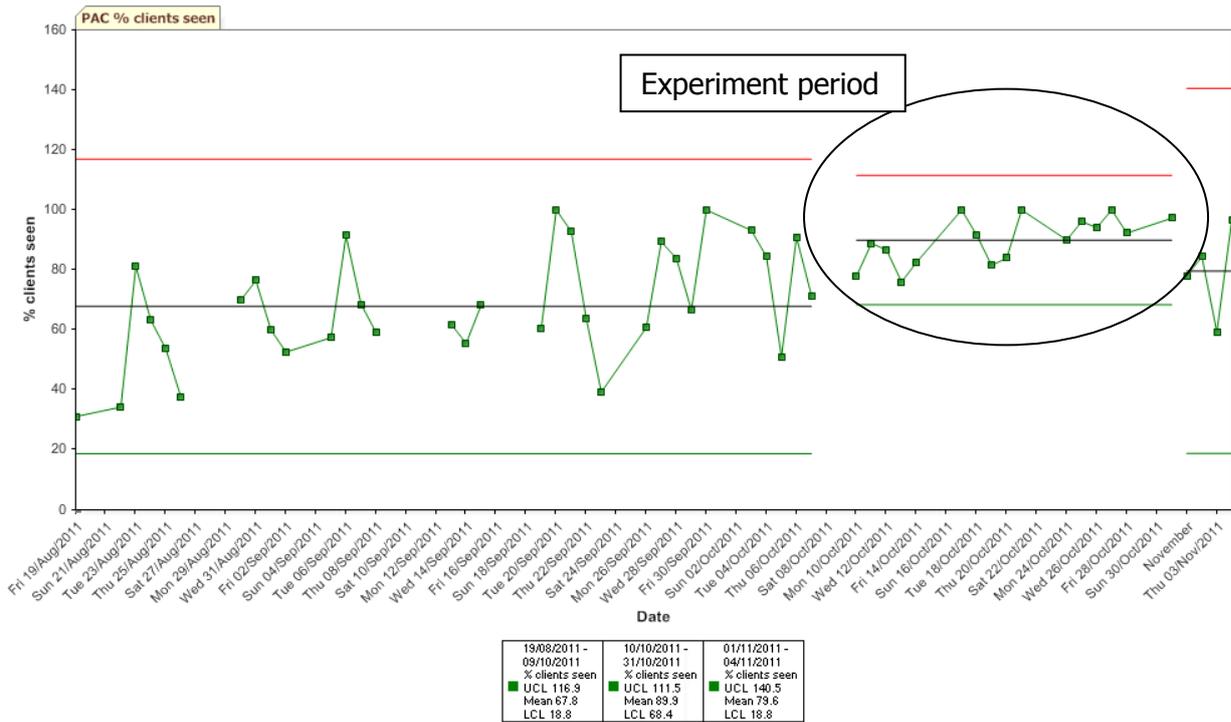
"It helped us to understand people's behaviours and needs differently. Some people come in with a big stack of bills and just say 'help me sort this out'. By going through all of that we started to understand what some of our high value, high frequency demands were instead of just looking at the stats. The problem with stats is that the system often makes people just tick boxes, 'that's a welfare one' that's a benefits one' etc. but it doesn't say anything about the whole picture, and by default people are being put into boxes, that they might not necessarily really fit in to."

(Member of the review team)

Experimenting with a new approach

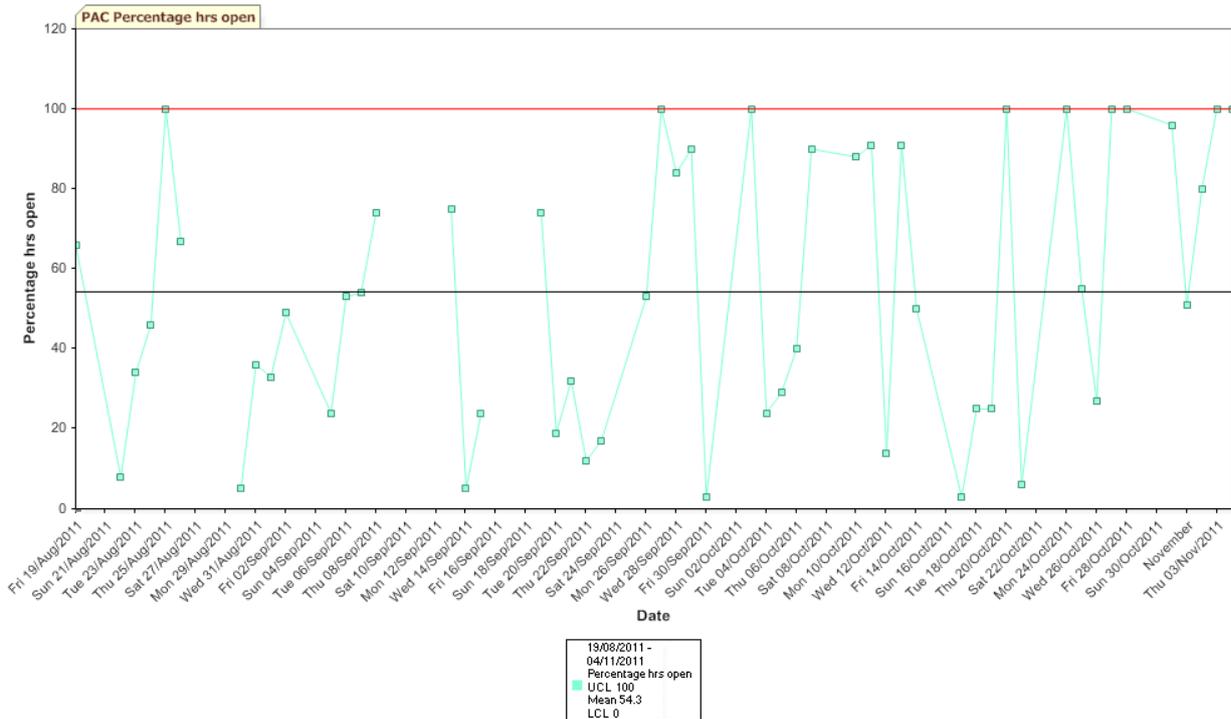
Having studied the service, the next step was to experiment with different ways of operating. The experiment period was relatively brief, because the procurement process began shortly afterwards and the two organisations delivering the service decided they would each bid separately, but the opportunity was taken to address some of the access barriers people were experiencing. When the service opened in the morning, experienced advisers were available to take as many people for interview as the centre could accommodate, rather than asking people to take a ticket and queue. Because of space limitations, clients who came subsequently had to queue as before, but stripping out some of the barriers to seeing advisers quickly meant that positive results were achieved.

The following capability chart shows the number of clients the service managed to interview each day.



As can be seen, during the experiment period, more clients were seen and the number became more predictable, indicated by the shallower difference between upper and lower control limits. Although there are very few data points after the experiment, the chart suggests that the number of clients seen had started to fall again and the figures were becoming more variable.

These findings are also reflected in the following chart of the proportion of days on which the centre remains fully open. Prior to the experiment, when the session supervisor judged demand to be outstripping the service's capacity to cope, people would be turned away and advised to return the following day. When the data were plotted, it became clear that on 56% of days, the service was actually accepting clients for less than 50% of the advertised opening times. However, whilst there are insufficient data points to confirm a systemic change, the cluster of data points at 100% on the right-hand side of the following chart would suggest a positive trend when the service experimented with putting experts as the first point of contact.



4. Procuring a new service and setting measures

The commissioning team were able to use the valuable insight experienced during this review to think about how the service could be redesigned, including factors such as:

- Understanding what people were asking for;
- The lived experience of customers;
- The levels of help requested;
- The categories of high frequency demand – predictable demand, and what the service needs to design against.

Having reviewed their learning from this approach, Portsmouth developed their commissioning methodology to encourage providers to really understand demand and to experiment to find the best approach. Rather than putting together a specification that would describe the particular service or solution they were looking for, the team drafted a tender that set out the purpose and principles of the service, defined by their customers’ needs. Service Principles gave the ‘backdrop’ to delivering the purpose of the service, including collaboration with other services to reduce the failure demand (demand that was presenting unnecessarily at the centre due to problems in other systems elsewhere).

The tendering process included a series of open questions about the challenges this presented. Within this open tendering process, providers were asked to put forward their proposals as to how they would design an approach to do what matters for people. The team ran an open day to answer questions about the approach, the data gained through the review, and the overall learning.

"It really made tenderers think, they couldn't just lift a model off the shelf from somewhere else. They really had to think about what the learning was

saying about the need. The provider who won it said it was the most intellectually challenging tender they had ever worked on."

(Member of the review team)

The team also worked hard to agree measures that would demonstrate how far the new service achieved its purpose, defined by their customers' needs, rather than measuring inputs or outputs from 'tick box' data-gathering. Measures were designed to support learning and continuous improvement, not to determine pre-set performance criteria or targets. This focused attention on what matters to the people using the service, and on dealing with a problem right the first time, rather than managing the consequences. Although these measures are work in progress that will evolve as the provider and commissioners' learning progresses, they are already making a difference to how far the service meets the needs of the customer.

The review team knew that under the old service about 30% of people were abandoning the service before they could be seen due to the lengthy waiting times: not a good thing for advice services, where only one in six people who are in debt actually come forward for help. Reducing the numbers of people abandoning trying to access the service was therefore one of the contract's initial measures. Another really important measure was capturing failure demand (demand presenting as a result of a failure in this or another system) and seeking to understand the steps that can be taken to address it.

5. Advice Portsmouth – designing the new Service

Having won the contract to run the service under the name of Advice Portsmouth, the successful organisation, YOU Trust, had to refurbish the building in which the new service was to be located and also recruit staff, as the team would be expanding. AdviceUK and Vanguard helped with the development of role descriptions for staff in the new service, which looked very different to the traditional job description. The job purpose was defined, as were the principles to which the staff member would work, but like the commissioning process itself, what the staff member would do was not specified, other than 'doing the right thing' for the people using the service. The person specifications for advisers also highlighted the importance of listening skills and the ability to work alongside people using the service, rather than simply technical advice knowledge.

When it came to thinking about launching the new service, the approach also looked very different. Service design normally starts with managers plotting out what needs to be done, the systems to put in place and the policies and procedures to be applied. A fundamental principle of the Vanguard Method is that decision-making is not divorced from the work: all decisions are based on knowledge gained in the work.

To have pre-determined how the service would work would simply replicate the barriers that existed previously, so YOU Trust managers agreed that the opening of the new service would be day 1 of a new experiment, learning as they went, and using data to inform how they would work. Key to this process was trusting frontline staff to 'do the right thing' and not constraining them with systems, processes or performance standards.

AdviceUK and Vanguard met with YOU Trust to agree a set of guiding principles for launching the new service:

- **Problems to start solving on Day One**
 - We are open when we say we are open
 - We never turn anyone away
 - We stop doing things that create queues
 - We learn how to connect the person needing help with an adviser who can help
- **Think**
 - Everyone is an adviser; some advisers do other things
 - Adviser expertise should be configured to demand
 - Advisers have 'deep' expertise in at least one specialism – debt, benefits, housing or employment, but we don't create functional specialisms...
 - When an adviser is free s/he takes the next person regardless of their problem: if they need help, they pull support from a colleague who has that 'deep' expertise

Underpinning the launch of the new service was a clear purpose based on what had been learned about what matters to the people who use the service.

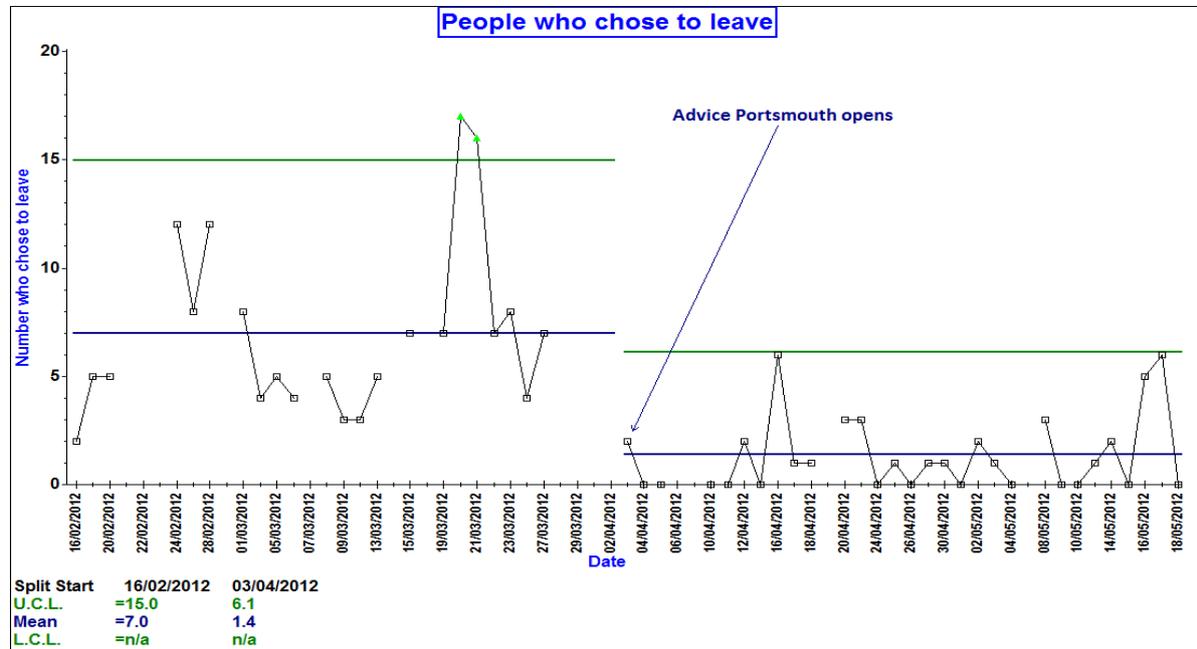
**Give the right advice and appropriate support
to help me solve my problem**

Purpose was underpinned by a clear set of principles that everyone had at the forefront of their minds.

Principles

- The people who use our service define what matters;
- We have conversations with people that help us to understand their problem and what matters;
- We only do the value work and what matters;
- We minimise hand-offs – with single-piece flow;
- We pull expertise when required, we don't hand people off;
- We help people to build independence and problem-solving skills;
- We base our discussions about the service on knowledge not opinions. If we don't have data, we study to get it.

From day one, staff were gathering data to help them understand what was happening in the service, what was working and what needed to change. Measures were designed to help managers and staff learn and to continuously improve. And very quickly, the change in the service became apparent.



From a 33% abandon rate (approximately 20 people a day) in the old service, fewer than 2% had to leave before they could be seen in the new service and, rather than being told to come back first thing in the morning to get in the queue, if people had to leave, they were offered a range of options, including a set time to see an adviser that was convenient for them.

By paying attention to delivering what mattered to the people using the service and ensuring people were seen by someone who could solve their problem, the bow-wave of pent-up demand, which had been such a problem previously, disappeared. Despite increased footfall, waiting times quickly dropped to an average of less than 20 minutes: the picture below was taken at 9.15 on day 2 of the new service. The empty waiting room is testament to the fact that everyone has been seen.



And of course, the impact of this on people's mood has also been marked. Staff report how the tension that was previously a feature of the waiting room no longer exists and they find Advice Portsmouth a really positive place to work.

What do people think of the new service?

Example of our improved process/procedure/ general:

"I believe the system you have works very well. From start to finish it was a seamless process which was very professionally executed".

10/10 Anonymous

"Friendly, informative, pleasant atmosphere, free water was refreshing. The adviser was exceptional and answered all our questions and more".

10/10 Anonymous

Examples of quality of staff and service:

"I was dealt with in a relaxed but professional and constructive manner. Great Support. Excellent".

9/10 Anonymous

"Found staff very helpful and friendly, waiting time was very little. Really pleased with advice and feel supported by staff as was feeling alone and worried about my situation".

10/10 Anonymous

"I have had the best advice possible with a friendly and expert adviser. Very impressed.

Example of our ethos of providing a holistic approach:

"Great help. Made this a lot clearer. Sorted out some things that others could not".

10/10 M. Foster

I only waited five minutes for an adviser in the drop in service. I only requested help for one issue but the adviser helped on all my issues and helped me deal with my problems as a whole.

10/10 Anonymous

"Professional staff, comfortable premises, questions answered fully and some additional info that was useful".

10/10 Anonymous

Example of making a real difference to peoples' lives:

"On the very first day I came in for help I was in such a state of desperation and hopelessness but after 2 more appointments with the adviser I am a different person. The adviser has gone an extra mile to advise and help me with my housing problems. Thank you Advice Portsmouth for this excellent service and excellent staff".

10/10 Anonymous

"The lady I saw today was very helpful and extremely pleasant. It was a relief to talk to her and I feel far more hopeful than I did before. The whole office felt warm and positive".

10/10 Anonymous

"I saw M today. He has been very helpful. He gave me the right advice and reassured. I came here very down and stressed with my financial problem but his help and advice was just what I needed. I came out from this place stress free and relieved".

10/10 Anonymous

The service I have received has been insurmountable. If it was not for this lady I would not be able to continue with my final year degree. I would be homeless and unable to further myself and my education".

10/10 Anonymous

"I came here in despair. The adviser was brilliant – he gave me hope with my housing situation when I thought there was none".

10/10 Anonymous

"I can't thank you enough for all your help. I'm crying tears of relief".

Examples comparing the old and new service:

"It has improved from the old service better than before".

10/10 Anonymous

"First time used and I am impressed. This is warm and friendly. Well done!

9/10 Anonymous

"Fantastic help. Why was this service not available previously? Thanks again."

10/10

Example of speed of service:

“Impressed with advice. Not having to wait long”.

10/10 Anonymous

“Swift, polite and helpful. Thanks”.

9 ½ /10 J Lee

“Only waited 10 minutes to be seen. All information and advice was good and helpful”.

10/10 Anonymous

Example of our ethos of empowering clients:

“The adviser really helped me today and built my confidence”

“At a time of complete chaos and confusion I was comforted, refocused and pointed in the right direction with a great helping hand allowing me to deal with the situation put on me. I could not have done this alone. Thank you.”

10/10 Anonymous

“The adviser has given me all the materials required to take ownership of my finances but made it clear I can come back for further assistance if required”.

9/10 Anonymous

6. Where do we go from here?

Having used the Vanguard Method to understand the demand presenting at Portsmouth’s main advice service, and to design services accordingly, it would be easy to look at the transformation that has occurred and think ‘job done’. However this is just the beginning of the journey for Advice Portsmouth. With the onset of the welfare reforms, demand is likely to increase over the coming months and years; and so it will be critical to really get to grips with the failure demand presenting at the service, and to work with other organisations to reduce it. There are also plans to widen the scope of some of the advice available in order to try and solve people’s problems without hand offs to other services – for example, through the provision of level one immigration advice, or weekly clinics around specific issues or for specific vulnerable groups.

Being aware of changes in demand, and using a culture of continuous improvement to plan and deliver the right services accordingly, will therefore be the key focus for the service going forward.

Notes

¹ More information is available in the Tackling Poverty needs assessment and strategy at: <http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/yourcouncil/20986.html>

² See http://www.infohub.moneyadvicetrust.org/resource.asp?cat_id=260&rPath=cat&r_id=673 for more information

³ <http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/research-and-analysis/lsrc/2010CSJSAnnualReport.pdf>

⁴ AdviceUK (2008) Ibid