

Falkirk Citizens Advice Bureaux: Response to Recommendations made by Scrutiny Panel

All three Citizens Advice Bureau within the Falkirk Council area have willingly participated within the pilot Scrutiny Panel. The CABx were provided with the Scrutiny Panel's full report and recommendations, and were invited to provide comments, which are detailed below.

The CABx Monitoring Officer will continue to work with the CABx to support the implementation of recommendations, as appropriate. The CABx response will be included as actions in the Strategic Joint Action Plan and progress will be recorded within quarterly monitoring returns.

Scrutiny Panel Recommendation	CABx Response
6.2 Outreach	
Outreach should be revised and modernised to maximise access to vulnerable groups, particularly for those who would not otherwise access the service.	CABx will continue to review our outreach services and develop them on a basis of need and available resources, focusing on maximising access to vulnerable groups and those who would otherwise not use our services.
The CABx identify further opportunities for targeted outreach, to work alongside other service providers in the Falkirk Council area.	CABx, where available resources permit, will identify further opportunities for targeted outreach work. In doing so, we will build on, and learn from, existing outreach that is proving to be effective at Falkirk Women's Aid, Bo'ness Dean Road Health Centre and Denny Homestart.
CABx work with Council Officers to identify rooms within Council buildings across the area, which can regularly be used as interview rooms.	CAB services are already provided in some Council premises via CLD, and this will be further developed via the joint Falkirk Council/CAB project, Falkirk Area Welfare Benefit Support Unit.
CABx continue to operate on the basis of client need rather than by designated geographical boundary.	CABx provide a service to any individual from the Falkirk Council area.
CABx ensure that the availability of home visits is publicised.	Information on our home visiting service is available online along with details of the criteria a home visit is subject to i.e. for those unable to attend a bureau due to sickness/disability. Any heightened publicity will also detail this criteria and will be targeted towards specific vulnerable groups.

6.3 Working with other agencies	
In conjunction with other agencies, consider the development of a client signposting and referral tracking system.	We will develop an in-house system to ascertain client take up of referrals. The system will be mindful of CAB principles, including confidentiality and the clients' right to decide. External agency participation is also required and this recommendation may be best Council led.
Provide the opportunity for advice providers to participate in a planning group, which will develop a strategic approach to provision of a consistent pathway of advice across the Falkirk Council area. This could include CABx, Community Advice, Department of Work and Pensions, Homelessness Welfare Advice Team	This recommendation would be best linked in with an existing forum, with the current DWP Customer Forum being the initial choice. This should be initiated by the Council.
6.4 Pace of Change	
JAG continue the excellent work	Noted.
JAG consider the use of the totality of the resource in terms of funding, staff and volunteers to ensure that best value is being achieved.	The CABx will work towards this recommendation by continuing to work with Council Officers to ensure the monitoring process is robust and to ensure best value is evidenced.
JAG provide Members with a follow-up report in 6 months regarding progress and any further proposed actions.	JAG will produce a follow-up report within 6 months of 1 st Jan 2014, which will be completed in conjunction with the monitoring framework.
6.5 Communication between CABx and Community Advice Services	
Ensure that communication between agencies is adequate and consistent.	The CABx will continue to develop effective communication between, and in conjunction with, agencies. Work being done and proposed for Recommendation 6.3, and the proposed work for the joint Falkirk Council/CAB Project, will also help in progressing this recommendation by developing procedures that will be embedded into mainstream practices.
Ensure that procedures across agencies in terms of referrals are clear and consistent.	Again, the CABx will develop existing practices through the joint Falkirk Council/CAB Project and embed them into our mainstream practices.
6.6 Premises	
Council Officers work with Falkirk CAB to consider alternative premises arrangements for the future.	Noted.