

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

Scrutiny Panel Recommendation	CABx Response at October 2013	CABx Progress at April 2014
<b>Outreach</b>		
1. 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.	CABx continue to test a range of outreach formats to assess what is the most accessible service for clients and the best use of resources. This includes open and appointment based outreach in various communities and facilities. Evaluation has highlighted that targeting specific client groups who are engaged with other agencies is generally most effective. It should however be noted that as highlighted within XX of the report, some traditional outreach services remain effective for example Bo'ness.
2. 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.	There has been an increase in the number of organisations who are now using the CABx to provide outreach services to their own clients. This has been introduced by proactively promoting the CABx service to organisations. New contact has been established with, for example, Y-People, Remploy, Silver Bairsns and Signpost Forth valley. Service is provided when required.
3. 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.	Outreach services are currently delivered in Bankier, Bonnybridge and Kersibank Community Education Centres. the service is evaluated on a quarterly basis and amended to suit the needs of the client group. CABx The Falkirk Area Welfare Benefits Advice Support Unit (FAWBASU), has now established points for outreach delivery within each Council ward providing an ability to provide specialist support to clients based on need and demand. A series of roadshows have recently taken place in One Stop Shops which highlighted CAB services to staff and clients. The Roadshows were particularly well received by Council staff, who were interested in the breadth of support provided.

4. 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.	Area wide initiatives are currently being delivered by the CABx, which include FAWBASU, ASAP, Fuel Poverty and Welfare advice for those with mental health issues. The bureaux identify a lead bureau and work collaboratively to ensure that clients from across the area have access to the services.
5. 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.	Home visits have increased during the past year. The service is available to people who have a specific reason for not being able to access a service within bureau offices, for example, terminal illness and frailty due to old age. Home visits are resource intensive and pose a challenge to the CABx.
<b>Working with other agencies</b>		
6. 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.	Referrals to other services are now tracked via quarterly monitoring returns. The majority of referrals made are to FAWBASU and the Foodbank. Referrals are tracked and uptake is monitored. It is more difficult to follow-up clients who have been signposted to other agencies. There has been limited progress in adopting a wider referral tracking system although it is anticipated that this will partly be supported in line with service development in connection with the impact of welfare reform.
7. 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.	CABx are keen to participate in relevant forum which may be developed in relation to the impacts of welfare reform. The CABx and other local providers are currently considering the formation of a practitioners forum and managers currently attend the DWP form. The CABx have been represented via FAWBASU in recent information exchange established through the Drugs and Alcohol Partnership.
<b>Pace of Change</b>		
8. JAG continue the excellent work	Noted.	JAG continues to meet on a quarterly basis and have recently updated the Joint Strategic Plan which describes the CABx

		collective direction up to 2017.
9. 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.	The CABx are now working together in a range of areas which contribute towards efficient use of resource for example, joint recruitment and training of volunteers, joint funding applications.
10. 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 <sup>st</sup> Jan 2014, which will be completed in conjunction with the monitoring framework.	Report to Scrutiny Committee 8 <sup>th</sup> May 2014.
<b>Communication between CABx and Community Advice Services</b>		
11. 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.	The joint project between Falkirk Council's Community Advice Service and CABx, FAWBASU has enabled enhanced communication and co-ordination of service provision. The FAWBASU Steering Group, which meets on a monthly basis. The Community Advice Manager for Welfare Benefits participates within the group along with CABx Managers. Debt advice statistics are recorded across Council and CABx services on a quarterly basis. A future action is for further analysis of this information to analyse trends.
12. 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.	Referral processes have now been developed for the FAWBASU project and being effectively used by CABx and Council. There remain some areas of improvement regarding lines of communication from the Council to the CABx. An example of this is changes in procedure for Discretionary Housing Payment which was not communicated effectively. There have however been areas of improvement, particularly where the CABx have contacted Council services or agencies to establish links and exchange information, for example with the SDS team. The One Stop Shop roadshows have also been an effective means of sharing information about CABx services to frontline Council staff.

Premises		
13.Council Officers work with Falkirk CAB to consider alternative premises arrangements for the future.	Noted.	Falkirk CAB have identified a possible new premises within a Council owned building. The Board and Manager have been working with Development Services to agree a lease and consider renovation of the premises. There is a considerable cost associated with the renovation of the building. Further information is attached as appendix 3.