

# VOLUNTARY ADVICE AGENCIES FORUM

Minutes of meeting held Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2011  
Kensington Town Hall, 2.30pm – 4.30pm

Chair: Jane Gray; WENAC

1.	<b>Welcome, Introduction and Apologies</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
2.	<p><b>Understanding the legal aspects of volunteers working in the advice sector; Volunteer Centre</b> Kirsty Palmer, Chief Executive of the Volunteer Centre in Kensington and Chelsea gave a very detailed presentation on all aspects of working with volunteers. A paper on working with volunteers was handed out to members (<b>paper attached</b>).</p> <p>Kirsty ended her presentation by stating that the Volunteer Centre offers support to organisations on all legal aspects of working with volunteers. Organisations can also sign up to the London Volunteer Management Charter.</p> <p>The Volunteer Centre will be visiting groups during the summer to ask groups what the Volunteer Centre can do for them. Visits will be taking place during August.</p>	
3.	<p><b>Update on HASKC since RBKC housing advice changes</b> Kate Spicer updated on HASKC stating that the RBKC housing advice contract had come to an end 30 June. The council decided that HASKC would exist but in a smaller form. The organisation now only provides housing advice to private tenants and owner occupiers in Kensington and Chelsea and has also lost two members of staff.</p> <p>At the moment the organisation is still called Staying Put Services but will become the Home Improvement and Adaptation Agency.</p> <p>Staying Put can only advise private tenants and owner occupiers They cannot advise TMO/ social housing tenants. There is an exception for TMO tenants referred by the rent income officers to Staying Put. However, tenants of any tenure can be advised on domestic violence issues.</p> <p>Due to the changes, people are currently being turned away because they are not eligible for advice.</p> <p>People not eligible to be advised by HASKC should go to their landlords.</p> <p>The organisation is no longer running surgeries from Westway on Thursdays and shortly they will move to only two advice surgeries a week.</p>	

	<p>A question was asked on the impact this is having on the town hall, Kate's response was that they are aware that people have gone to the town hall for advice but have been turned away. However, they are not yet fully sure about the scale of the impact.</p> <p>HASKC confirmed that they had to turn 5 people away in the first week of the changes during the Monday drop in surgery and on the Tuesday surgery, 3 people were turned away. These people are not eligible for advice and are being referred back to their landlords.</p> <p>The concern is that people going back to their landlords for advice will be forced to negotiate unsustainable rent repayments in order to catch up.</p>	
3.1	<p>It was agreed that all advice agencies need to be keeping statistics on people asking for advice due to the housing changes and the reduction in the availability of advice. AS agreed to send reminder out with the minutes.</p>	AS
4	<p><b>The Future of VAAF</b></p> <p><b>Proposal 1</b> That VAAF invite two private practices into its membership. They will not be full members but associate members, invited by invitation only. If agreed the terms of reference will be updated to signify change. <b><i>(There were no objections to the proposal).</i></b></p> <p><b>Proposal 2</b> That the name of Voluntary Advice Agencies Forum be changed to Advice Forum. <b><i>(There were no objections to the proposal).</i></b></p> <p><b>Proposal 3</b> VAAF submit a proposal for membership unto the Kensington and Chelsea Partnership. <b><i>(There were no objections to the proposal).</i></b></p>	<p>JG/AS</p> <p>AS</p> <p>JG/CB</p>
5.	<p><b>Minutes of the Last Meeting held 14<sup>th</sup> April 2011</b></p> <p><i>Minutes approved</i></p>	
6.	<p><b>Members Update</b> Members gave an update of work and news items.</p> <p><b>MRCF</b> The organisation seem to be seeing more vulnerable people, there has been a definite increase in numbers.</p> <p>The digital activism course is going well.</p>	

	<p><b>CABKC</b> The National Citizens Advice has begun hosting Consumer Direct and Consumer Focus Service since April 2011. This is a big telephone service which has begun since the abolition of Consumer Direct.</p> <p>In terms of legal aid, everything goes out of scope by 2013, but the reality is that the funding for legal aid will be gone by April 2012. Advice sector will be given £20 million to help with the transition. There will be a linear cut of 10% to advice agencies on fixed fee cases by October 2010.</p>	
	<p><b>Advice Now</b> Advice Now is locally recruiting volunteers who will operate the pilot triage advice system.</p>	
	<p><b>KCSC</b> Engaging Communities VOF held 13 July had a very good discussion on the Equalities Bill and on the Big Lottery research on whether identity based groups such as BME groups still need support from identity based organisations. Attendance was not as good as we expected but presentation and discussions were very informative.</p>	
	<p><b>WENAC</b> Will hopes to have a volunteer housing adviser later this year.</p>	
	<p><b>RBKC</b> Organisations funded through corporate grants will receive a grant next year so no application for funding for next year will be required, subject to monitoring. The amount of the grant will not be known until Dec 2011.</p> <p>The small grants fund is all allocated but £7,000 is still available and will be open for applications shortly.</p> <p>The City Living, Local Life pilots will be launched in September.</p>	
	<p><b>Age Concern</b> The organisation is monitoring the effects of the housing cap on older people. The organisation is also taking on more work since the demise of Chelsea Care brokerage service.</p> <p>There are currently two Primary Care Navigators working in GP surgeries, one in the north of the borough and one in the south. They deal with non-medical issues. To date Navigators have made 80 referrals. It is believed that if this approach is successful then GPs will look at commissioning this work on a wider scale.</p>	
	<p><b>LINK K&amp;C</b> LINK is now devolving to Local Health Watch, as part of the new role it will be providing additional information and advice. It is currently</p>	

	carrying out a mapping exercise on what goes on in the borough already in order to avoid duplication of services.	
	<b>Carers K&amp;C</b> The new carers booklet is now available.	
	<b>Future agenda items</b> AS suggested inviting one or two BME groups to provide an update on the impact of public cuts such as changes to housing on the BME community at the next meeting, as it was felt that attendance at VAAF from BME groups has dropped and would like to encourage attendance.  AS suggested perhaps asking someone from Shelter to give a presentation on the impact of the housing cuts.  JG suggested that we invite Amanda Gill and Rob Shaw from RBKC again as their last attendance was extremely useful.  Further agenda items welcome	<b>AS</b>    <b>AS</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>AOB</b> none	
<b>9.</b>	<b>Dates of future meetings</b>  <b>22<sup>nd</sup> September, Committee Room 1</b>	

# Attendance List

Voluntary Advice Agencies Forum Meeting  
Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> July, Committee Room 1, Kensington Town Hall

## 1. Attendees

	Name	Organisation
1	Charles Barber	KCAB
2	Beth Crossland	MRCF
3	Kate Spicer	Staying Put (HASK)
4	Jane Gray	WENAC
5	Angela Spence	KCSC
6	Lucy Ashall	RBKC
7	Kirsty Palmer	VCKC
8	Simon Bisiker	Rugby Portobello
9	Mohammed Aran	ACKC
10	Nicola Hart	LINK
11	Madi Gilkes	Carers KC

## 2. Apologies

	Name	Organisation
1	Sue Mountford	Royal Association for Deaf People
2	Howard Taylor	The ClementJames Centre