

Advice Workforce Development Programme

Call for tenders to review and analyse existing workforce and capacity related issues, affecting social welfare advice providers which impact on their ability to deliver and sustain their advice provision. Our aim is to support advice providers to have everything they need in place and funded to support a diverse advice workforce.



Introduction

We welcome your interest in this tender to support us to identify existing workforce and capacity related issues which impact on the ability to deliver, sustain and grow advice provision and the advice workforce. The findings will help to identify the capacity-building needs of the advice sector with a view to influencing approaches to funding, training and support including peer support and supervision.

We anticipate this work will involve looking at what currently works well and why, as well as identifying what doesn't work, where there are challenges and gaps and what they are. However, this fact-finding exercise is only part of this process.

More importantly, and informed by the fact finding, we require you to propose a range of solutions to issues identified as well as highlighting where what works may be transferrable across the sector and explain how this might be done.

It is also important that we understand what works well but may *not* be transferrable as it is specific to particular communities/advice providers.

It is essential that you have an in-depth knowledge of the needs of the social welfare advice sector in London and an understanding of the diversity and range of advice providers across the sector - including organisations that solely provide advice and those that provide advice as part of a broader service offer

Experience of working with equity/user led organisations is essential as is knowledge of the external factors, for example Access to Work, that can impact on people applying for jobs and remaining in the advice workforce. We want to establish the reasonable resources required to deliver services safely and reliably, and we are looking for the information generated to be capable of being migrated onto a user-friendly online tool for advice organisations and funders to be able to access.¹

We do not require you to undertake any in-depth review of pay and employment conditions as we have a separate piece of work looking at this, although you will need to highlight where organisations are mentioning this as a key factor in terms of recruiting and retaining staff and you will need to liaise with any consultant looking at pay and conditions.

¹ The [Refugee Action Good Practice](#) website – accessible via free registration - is a possible example of what we would be looking for in terms of a user-friendly online tool.

It will be essential that you are familiar with the findings of two key reports *Advising Londoners* (ASA, 2020), and *Mind The Gap...* (LLST, 2022).² This tender must build on the workforce-related recommendations within these reports, and we are very keen to award a tender that moves away from telling us what we already know, to one which proposes tangible solutions to some of the issues you identify with the sector.

We anticipate the audience for this work is twofold:

- (1) **Advice providers** - so they can learn from case studies you develop about the range of issues identified and consider how to progress any solutions you propose; and
- (2) **Funders** - so they are better aware of all of the needs and capacity support that should be in place to maintain a successful advice service, we hope they can then build in these additional costs into their funding plans and awards.

When scoping your work, you will need to consider capacity issues as they relate to:

- **Current approaches to recruitment and retention** – what is working and what isn't (and why either of those are the case) and what could be done to improve recruitment and retention of staff. Note, we do not require the consultant to consider salary or working conditions so work on this tender will be limited to other tactics employed by agencies to recruit and retain staff, including but not limited to identifying what attracts people to the sector, any barriers people have experienced entering the sector, career development, training, wellbeing support etc.
- **Current training available for both advice agency staff and managers:** how effective it is; how accessible it is; and how it is funded; how well it is accessed; levels of awareness. We want to see examples of different approaches to training and to better understand good practice, e.g. identifying training needs; available training and how its effectiveness is evaluated
- **What peer support is available within and between agencies** and how well that is working and whether it is contributing to capacity sustainability / building. What extra capacity is needed to provide peer support?
- **Identify best practice in terms of the different forms of supervision** – e.g. managerial, clinical, technical, independent file review and other - and how this can contribute (or otherwise) to sustaining or building capacity. However also identify what might cause supervision to become more challenging or where there is a risk for supervisory processes to collapse.

This work will be overseen by a multi-stakeholder Organisational Capacity task-and-finish group,³ which is part of the Advice Workforce Development Fund programme, co-chaired

² The two key reports are: [Advising Londoners](#) (ASA, 2020), and [Mind The Gap...](#) (LLST, 2022). Research to date has highlighted several complex and interconnected challenges facing the advice sector, ranging from the rising demand for advice services, to shrinking funding, insufficient infrastructure, gaps in organisational capacity, and workforce development challenges. This tender is concerned with workforce-related organisational capacity issues in particular.

³ You can access the task-and-finish group's terms of reference via the programme website [here](#).

by sector experts, and funded by Propel funders.⁴ The contract will be with the London Legal Support Trust (LLST), which facilitates the AWDF programme.

Key Information Summary Box:

Project timescale	March 2025 – October 2025
Primary contact	Chris Scutt – christopher@llst.org.uk
Deadline for tender proposals	Monday 10 February 2025, 12:00
Approximate budget	£15,000 - £20,000

The Brief

We anticipate this work will involve looking at what currently works well and why, as well as identifying what doesn't work, where there are challenges and gaps and what they are. We expect any consultant to propose a range of solutions to issues identified as well as highlighting where what works may be transferrable across the sector and explain how this might be done. It will also be important to highlight what works well but may *not* be transferrable as it is specific to particular communities/advice providers.

Advice providers and our partners tell us that delivering advice is not just about the number of staff they have but as important is support and resources for:

- Recruitment and retention of staff including HR issues
- Training
- File Review and supervision
- Peer support

Some have already adopted innovative solutions - for example, peer support across small advice providers so workers are not isolated; whilst others tell us they struggle with, for example, independent file review of casework and this impacts on their ability to apply for quality standards. We want to hear all these voices and we want you to encourage providers to be honest about the difficulties and challenges they face.

We also need to better understand the resource implications for organisations (and funders). What *types* of costs are involved in each solution, such as management time to progress issues like recruiting, inducting, training and supervising advice workers. We need any recommended models to be accompanied by a review of the risks to advice providers of **not** adopting approaches where they would be appropriate

We require you to break down your review and analysis into the following specific areas:

- (i) **Different types of advice** on offer and the impact on capacity of their varying training, qualification and regulatory requirements. This includes the range of social welfare advice including where there are regulatory requirements for

⁴ The programme's funders include the National Lottery Community Fund, City Bridge Foundation, Trust for London, Legal Education Foundation and Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

- example with immigration, debt advice;
- (ii) **Additional factors and impacts for equity-focussed organisations**, e.g. Deaf and Disabled People’s Organisations (DDPOs) and organisations working with diverse ethnic communities;⁵
 - (iii) Applicability to **smaller advice organisations**, including recommended safe minimum service levels and examples of how to build their capacity/workforce;
 - (iv) Applicability **not only to organisations but also collaborative partnerships**;
 - (v) **Phases of capacity-development through which an organisation might progress**, starting with **baseline standards**.

The approach to this work that we are looking for can be summarised by the layout of the table below.

	Types of advice	Equity-focus	Smaller orgs	Partnerships	Phases of development
Recruitment and retention of staff	To include resource implications for each				
Training					
Peer support					
Supervision incl. file review					

The deliverables, by October 2025, will therefore be to produce a report which:

Identifies and analyses existing workforce and capacity related issues which impact on the ability to deliver, sustain and grow advice provision and the advice workforce. The report will need to:

- Contain **recommended models** that can be used by social welfare advice providers and partnerships of all sizes and types, including the impact of: regulatory and training requirements; a focus on equity; and being a small advice provider;
- Contain **case studies** to complement the recommendations, drawn from across the advice sector organisations;
- Be **capable of being used by grant funders and commissioning bodies** to inform their funding decisions and amounts;
- Be **capable of being shared via a user-friendly online platform**.

You will work closely with members of the Organisational Capacity task-and-finish group, who will offer support and contribute to the content of these deliverables. For day-to-day support and direction where necessary, the consultant will work with LLST’s programme management team. We will look to set up a small group of the T&F group’s members, including the co-chairs, to help provide oversight and support for the project.

⁵ Equity is a major priority of our programme, and the wider Propel initiative, whose values include power sharing and equitability. We are therefore keen to ensure that the work we commission has been led by and engages with sector experts, especially those who understand/experience structural inequalities; DDPOs and organisations reflecting diverse ethnic communities are referred to specifically above, but we are looking for this project to capture as diverse a range of voices from across the sector as possible; so that the work produced is as useful as possible to organisations who have that same understanding and experience.

Indicative timeline

Milestone	Date (2025)
Call for tenders	w/c Monday 6 January
Deadline for tender submissions	Monday 10 February, 12 noon
Shortlisted applicants notified	By Friday 14 February
Interviews with shortlisted applicants	Between Mon 24 February – Mon 3 March
Researcher appointed	By Monday 10 March
Work begins	From Monday 24 March (earlier if agreements signed in time)
Project inception meeting	Between Mon 24 March – Mon 31 March, with schedule of check-ins arranged at the inception meeting
Meeting with Organisational Capacity task-and-finish group to present methodology	Wednesday 2 April, 12:00-13:30
First draft, and presentation of findings to the task-and-finish group	August 2025 (dates TBC, with flexibility for summer holidays)
Written feedback on first draft	By Friday 5 September
Deadline for final draft	Tuesday 23 September
Final reports published	Early-October 2025

What we are looking for

We are seeking proposals from individuals/organisations or partnerships with the following knowledge, skills and experience:

- Knowledge of the social welfare advice sector and its challenges (an understanding of the diversity, complexity of advice organisations and sector is essential);
- Knowledge of organisational-capacity related issues.
- Knowledge of HR implications in terms of recruitment and the workforce;
- Experience of using a range of research and engagement methods to gather information, including from individuals and organisations who may be time-poor;
- Ability to produce clear, concise and accessible reports for different audiences, with meaningful recommendations (experience of producing findings which are then used as online resources is desirable);
- Experience of working with equity-led groups;
- Commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion in every aspect work;
- Knowledge and experience of taking into account the needs and perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders;
- Ability to work with the support and oversight of a team of stakeholders;
- Understanding of systems thinking, connections between different sectors and themes, and the possible impacts of recommendations made.

We know that this project requires a diverse range of skills and experience. We therefore welcome tenders from teams and partnerships as well as individuals. If you feel that you

meet some but not all of the criteria, please let us know what you would be able to deliver for us – as this will enable us to commission elsewhere in those areas.

Process for tendering

To submit your tender for this work, please provide us with the following:

- Details of the proposed team, including CVs and relevant expertise
- Brief proposal of your work, including how you would approach the above-mentioned deliverables and outputs
- Indicative timescales
- Indicative budget (including VAT, where applicable) and break-down of staff costs and days needed for this project
- Consideration of compliance with research ethics, safeguarding and GDPR.

The closing date for submissions is **Monday 10 February 2025**, and your tender documents should be sent to Chris Scutt at christopher@llst.org.uk.

We are aiming for interviews to take place between Mon 24 February and Mon 3 March 2025, and ideally we would like the successful consultant to start work by Weds 24 March 2025.

Contact

If you have any questions about this tender, or would like to know more about the Advice Workforce Development Fund programme in which the work will sit, please contact Chris Scutt at the London Legal Support Trust, via email at christopher@llst.org.uk.

The London Legal Support Trust
January 2025

Appendix A: Who we are

Our work falls under the [Advice Workforce Development Fund](#) (AWDF): a programme supported by a London-wide funder initiative, [Propel](#), which seeks to address the root causes of the issues facing civil societies in London. Most parts of the AWDF focus on addressing the multitude of workforce issues impacting recruitment, training, progression, and retention across the advice sector.⁶ We invite you to read more about the background to the AWDF in Appendix B, [below](#).

This tender is being overseen by a task and finish group of the AWDF, made up of sector experts such as advice delivery organisations, funders, wider voluntary sector representatives, and members who have joined us for their specific knowledge and experience.

What do we mean by social welfare advice?

By social welfare advice, we mean organisations that provide free advice to those who need it on the following topics⁷:

- Welfare benefits: eligibility and access to welfare benefits, income maximisation (which focuses on promoting the uptake of welfare benefits).
- Money and debt: advice and guidance on how to avoid debt and how to deal with it when it becomes a problem.
- Immigration: the provision of advice on immigration issues, which is subject to its own regulatory framework.
- Employment: rights at work, for example, around unfair dismissal, unfair treatment, withheld pay.
- Housing: access to social housing, advice on housing rights and eviction (including around the management and condition of accommodation), access to assistance when facing or experiencing homelessness.
- Disability, discrimination and social care advice.
- Human rights and Discrimination law.
- Additional forms of social welfare advice not described above.

Many (but not all) advice organisations belong to networks and/or membership bodies, and a number will hold accreditation or quality marks relevant to the advice they provide.

These networks, membership bodies and accreditation schemes include the following:

- [Advice Quality Standard](#) (AQS) – by Advice Services Alliance

⁶ By advice sector, we mean civil society organisations providing practical support, assistance, advocacy, or representation to people facing various challenges including legal, financial, and social issues. Many of the individuals and families these organisations work with are facing the effects of discrimination, poverty and inequality. Advice organisations will often also seek to identify emerging themes in their caseload, so they are able to use the law in more strategic ways to address an issue at a wider level.

⁷ We have drawn upon the seminal report into advice provision, gaps and strategic challenges in London, [Advising Londoners](#) (ASA, 2020), to determine the scope and definitions of this research (at p.11), and have added human rights and discrimination law.

- [Advice UK](#)
- [London Citizens Advice](#) – making up 28 Citizens Advice charities in London
- [Law Centres Network](#)
- [Advice Workforce Development Fund](#) partners

Appendix B: Background information to the Advice Workforce Development programme

In 2020, a report commissioned by Advice Services Alliance, [Advising Londoners](#), highlighted rapidly increasing demand for advice services (even before the COVID-19 pandemic and cost of living crisis) which were not matched by advice provision. The report also identified key strategic challenges including workforce, funding infrastructure gaps, and recommended coordinated investment in the supply of personnel, and London-wide approaches.

This report was followed by a further piece of research, in 2022, commissioned by LLST, called [Mind the Gap](#) which made a number of recommendations for addressing workforce gaps, including developing ‘Grow our own’, community-based advice training, apprenticeship schemes backed by the Apprenticeship Levy, and more. It also recommended development of sector-wide strategy.

In 2023, Propel funders including the City Bridge Foundation, and Trust for London, responded to the two reports by pooling £4.15m of funding via its “Robust Safety Net” mission to support eight community-led partnerships to test and scale up recruitment, training and development initiatives to attract new people into the advice sector and for existing staff to have clear progression pathways.

You can find out more about the Advice Workforce Development programme via our website: AdviceWorkforceDevelopmentFund.org.uk.