

PM Plenary: Building a Thriving Advice Workforce

Speakers: Phil Jew & Jo Hickman

Theme: What does a thriving advice workforce look like? What systemic, creative, and collaborative actions are needed?

Context & Achievements

Referenced Report: *Advising Londoners* (ASA, 2020)

Initiatives Introduced: AWDF and ALP

Key Achievements:

- Co-designed new pathways into advice work
- 70,000 Londoners advised
- 2,600 trained through AFA
- 5:1 return on investment
- 21 solicitor apprenticeships and traineeships
- 46 new trainee advisers with diverse backgrounds and lived experience
- Nearly 400 staff trained
- Emphasis on persistence, creativity, and generosity

Collaboration & Inclusion

- **Cross-sector partnerships** are vital
- **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI):** Learn from DDPOs, community orgs, and “by and for” agencies
- **Trust-building** takes time, care, and **dedicated investment**
- Fund the **relationships** that enable an inclusive sector

Voices & Stories

- Learning from **clients, staff, and trainees**
- Many enter the sector through **random or accidental routes**
- Motivation is driven by **social justice**, not pay
- **Training opportunities** are a key motivator
- Need for **positive messaging** about advice work and career pathways

Training & Support

- Training must be **tailored, flexible, and culturally appropriate**
- Enable training **without burdensome output targets**
- New roles (e.g., AFA trainers) have **system-wide benefits**
- Need for **central coordination and infrastructure** to maximize impact

Recruitment & Retention

- Clarify **pathways and motivations**
- Learn from **best practices in DDPOs**
- Proposal: Create a **London Advice Workforce Hub**
 - A shared space for joining, learning, and collaborating
- Invest in **future-ready capacity**

Call for Evidence

Phil shared a QR Code and asked for feedback on the Advice Sector Workforce Organisational Capacity Review 2025

Key Learning Points from Jo Hickman

Retention

- Go beyond turnover: consider **employee preferences and intentions**
- Understand **enthusiastic vs. reluctant stayers/leavers**
- Plan for **workplace and non-workplace shocks**
- Focus on **“Good Jobs”** rather than just retention
- Align **intrinsic motivation** with organisational goals
- Consider broader context: e.g., **housing insecurity** and its impact on workforce stability

Wellbeing

- Differentiate between **wellbeing at work** and **wellbeing by work**
- Share anonymised data to understand what’s working
- Shift focus: **change the workplace**, not the worker

- Combine **systemic and individualised approaches**
- Refer to the **Wellbeing Playbook** (LINK)
- Key wellbeing drivers:
 - Belonging
 - Achieving goals
 - Trust
 - Pay & compensation
 - Flexibility
- Prioritisation is essential—can't do everything at once

Culture & Climate

- Culture = unconscious assumptions, shared meanings, and behaviours
- Psychological safety is **essential for creativity and innovation**
- Beware of being **“helplessly busy”**—it can reduce productivity
- Ask: What should we **stop doing**?
- Promote **collective accountability** for wellbeing and job quality
- Invest in **learning and development**—strong links to retention

Final Reflections

- Explore **learning agility**
- Leadership is a **resource we're underutilising**
- Despite resource scarcity, we have **abundant human potential**