

**Hammersmith and Fulham Advice Forum Minutes**  
**10 September 2015, 2pm – 4pm**

Minutes and attachments are held at:

<http://www.advicestation.org.uk/info/reports-resources/advice-forum/afm-10092015>

**Venue:** Hammersmith Town Hall, London W6 9JU

**Attendees:**

Amarjeet Mehmi	Shelter
Barbara Drozdowicz	EEAC (Eastern Europe Advice Centre)
Bernice Wood	Shepherds Bush Families Project
Celia Barrett	Hestia
Councillor Sue Fennimore	Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion
Doreen Taggart	Action on Disability
Helen Jackson	HF Law Centre
Jonathan Martin	DEBK
Jude Wood	UPG
Justine Dornan	Healthier Homes Project
Katherine Green	Crosslight
Keith Mallinson	HF Mind
Kelly-Marie Jones	HF Law Centre
Leo Fenn	Hestia
Malgosia Pakulska	EEAC (Eastern Europe Advice Centre)
Malika Hamiddou	CITAS
Mandy Goodall	HF Law Centre
Mark Knight	Hestia
Mary Godwin	Healthier Homes Project
Melanie Nock	Hammersmith United Charities
Mike England	LBHF
Reshma Begum	Hestia Housing and Support
Sara Thomas	Crosslight
Sue James	HF Law Centre
Tarequl Islam	Pinnacle PSG
Velma Baptiste	LBHF Housing
Yolanda Keough	London Irish Centre
Zahra Beg	LBHF Housing Options
Zahra Dehghani	Iranian Association

**1. Minutes of the last meeting & matters arising**

No comments or amendments to the minutes of the last meeting.

**2. Advice Station and the Advice Impact report**

The H&F Advice Station project (BLF funded) ended at the end of August 2015.

Mandy Goodall, the Advice Station Project Manager is now employed by H&F Law Centre to continue the strategic work; co-ordinate the Advice Forum; build partnerships; arrange training for the sector; maintain and update the website and further develop the referral system. Additionally she will develop pro-bono advice clinics

in response to the gaps in advice provision identified by this project (employment, family law, housing) and will work on the development of guidance and prevention materials (for training use and general dissemination).

There will be an Advice Impact report available in due course which will be distributed to all. It would be good to present the impact of advice findings to the advice sector and we hope to do this via an Advice Conference. We would expand the conference to include relevant speakers and training workshops.

### 3. Our Local Funders

- **Dr Edwards and Bishop King's Fulham Charity (DEBK)**, Presentation, Jonathan Martin, Clerk to the Trustees and Company Secretary, DEBK

DEBK have two grants programmes, one for individuals and one for organisations. All grants must be for the benefit of individuals living within the old Metropolitan Borough of Fulham.

Please click on the links below for more information or visit the website at [www.debk.org.uk](http://www.debk.org.uk)

[Grants for Organisations](#)

[Relief in Need](#)

Grants for organisations average £5k. The charity supports most applications that support people in need in Fulham. Organisations who believe they fit with the criteria should apply.

Grants for individuals average £1 - £1.5k and are for goods only, NOT cash.

There are currently no organisations that support people with completing application forms for Relief in Need grants.

**ACTION:** MG will look at ways to co-ordinate AF members to provide this support.

DEBK have an extensive archive of information. All are welcome to approach the charity if they are interested in knowing more or want an opinion on matters relating to Fulham.

- **Hammersmith United Charity (HUC)**, Presentation, Melanie Nock, Grants Manager, Hammersmith United Charities

HUC offer:

[Sheltered housing](#) for people who live in or have a strong connection to the borough. Full occupancy at the moment, so there is a waiting list. People can self-refer.

Grants programme. This started in 2012 and is evolving in line with need. HUC allocate £350k per year.

HUC have a long term (10 year) funding agreement to allocate £100k per annum to the Big Local programme in White City (match funding with the Big Lottery).

£250k is available as grants to organisations working to prevent or relieve hardship or distress in the Metropolitan Borough of Hammersmith. Average grant size is £10 – 12k per year.

They also offer micro grants of up to £500 for one off projects and activities or for specific pieces of equipment and the charity would be pleased to see an uptake of these grants.

Please click [here](#) to find out more about grants or visit the website at [www.hamunitedcharities.org.uk](http://www.hamunitedcharities.org.uk)

Borough info and statistics - HUC have invested in a computer programme that enables them to carry out specific searches and bring relevant information together. They will be putting relevant results on their website.

HUC presented borough statistics at their recent conference. The conference report is filed with these minutes.

#### 4. Welfare Reform update

Mike England, Lead Director for Housing LBH&F, gave an update on welfare reform and its impact in the borough.

Statistical updates:

Since July 2015 there are no families with children living in B&B accommodation. People are housed in the borough and outside – 55% in borough, 55% outside. 220 people in H&F are currently affected by the benefit cap.

Particular problems this year:

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) budget has been halved in 2015/16 to £800k (was £1.6 million last year). Some additional money has been provided by the administration to ease this cut.

Key items from summer budget:

- Four year freeze on working age benefits.  
This will mean more pressure on tenancies in the private rented sector.
- Benefit cap reduced to £23k from mid-2016. This will triple the number of people affected by the cap. The local authority will do some alleviating work but this will be challenging for all.
- All social housing tenants will have a rent decrease of 1%.  
This will impact on the L.A. as a reduction in income.
- Council tenants who earn more than £40k will pay market rent.  
The L.A. have not seen the detail of this yet but the increased rental income will go to central government. It has yet to be decided how the salary detail will be gathered.
- Right to Buy has been extended to Housing Association tenants.  
The L.A. will need to sell properties to fund this.

There will be much work for the Local Authority going forward. There will be pressure on all budgets – for the L.A. and RSLs.

Universal Credit:

Currently a few hundred people in the borough receive Universal Credit (UC). Over the next few years all claimants will move to UC. Migration will start in the next 12 – 18 months. The L.A. are currently considering how the borough will cope with this.

Some discussion around this topic and the impact on the advice sector:

Could the Forum make representation to Greg Hands, Conservative MP for Fulham? Perhaps a Lobbying/Campaigning group could be set up to take issues forward.

**ACTION:** MG will email voluntary sector members to hopefully start such a group.

Homelessness and Poverty Commission has been set up by Cllr Sue Fennimore. The commission will report in April / May 2016. The Advice Forum could feed in to this report.

People will need help with benefit claims and form filling as this need is likely to increase in the coming year. The advice sector and LBHF need to consider how this can be picked up by the advice sector.

## **5. The future of council housing in Hammersmith and Fulham**

Tom Hopkins, Lead Independent Tenants and Leaseholders Adviser, gave an update on the H&F Housing Representatives Forum on the Stock Options Appraisal & Residents' Commission.

An independent Residents' Commission (13 members) has been set up to look at the future of council housing in the borough – including this fundamental question of ownership – and has responsibility for overseeing a formal Options Appraisal. An Options Appraisal is a formal way of assessing how to raise the funding needed to meet the investment needs of the Council's housing.

The Commission will make its report to the Council, with a recommendation on the future of council housing, by December 2015.

This was an interesting, detailed and complex subject. A summary of the presentation provided by Tom is filed with these minutes.

## **6. Proposed closure of Hammersmith County Court**

The consultation on the provision of court and tribunal services in the London area is open now and closes on 8 October 2015. The consultation document is filed with these minutes.

## **7. Advice Forum meetings – the year ahead and agenda suggestions**

Suggestions:

Customer Engagement report - presentation from LBHF

DWP update – Colin Morris

Update / progress from Mike England

Floating support service

Public Health (for January)

## **8. Round table update and discussion**

We ran out of time for this.

## **9. Dates of next meetings**

4 November 2015, 2 – 4p.m, Courtyard Room, H&F Town Hall

13 January 2016, 2 – 4p.m, Courtyard Room, H&F Town Hall