

Hammersmith and Fulham Advice Forum Minutes
Wednesday 20 May 2015, 2pm – 4pm

Venue: Hammersmith Town Hall, London W6 9JU

Attendees:

Amarjeet Mehmi	Shelter
Barbara Drozdowicz	EEAC (Eastern Europe Advice Centre)
Councillor Sue Fennimore	Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion
Duncan Brown	LBHF
Hasina Begum	LBHF Housing Unit
Jade Swaby	HF Law Centre
Jay Shah	Maggies Cancer Centres
Jill Collins	DWP
Joy Paul	HF CAB
Malika Hamiddou	CITAS
Mandy Goodall	Advice Station (Minutes)
Naheed Malik	OnePlace
Paul Rosenberg	LBHF
Sally Jackson	Standing Together
Sarah Makhlouf	SBHG / Staying First
Sue James	HF Law Centre (Chair)
Surinder Matharu	HF Law Centre
Tom Kenny	Action on Disability
Velma Baptiste	LBHF Housing
Zahra Beg	LBHF Housing Options

1. Minutes of the last meeting & matters arising

Malika Hamiddou of CITAS had not been included as an attendee at the last meeting. She had attended the meeting and has now been added retrospectively.

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

2. Housing update – from LBHF

Housing benefit (Paul Rosenberg) team continue to be on top of their workload.

DHP is confirmed to be set at £780k so will be a tough year.

They have no info yet from the new Government on welfare change.

Rental income (Duncan Brown) team are working proactively with clients who they have identified as being at risk of falling into rent arrears. Clients are visited and when rent letters are sent out a letter of support services is included (includes employment advice). The aim is to tackle problems as they present and reduce the number of possession proceedings.

The team also work closely with the London Plus Credit Union who now have a 5 day a week presence at the White City estate.

3. Advice Station – Website and Referrals

Advice Station website is up and running. advicestation.org.uk

This is a good source for advice information and resources. It is particularly useful as a resource for advice providers within the borough. From this website you can find advice providers in particular areas along with contact details and opening hours. Details of training events, Advice Forum minutes and Advice Station statistics (updated monthly) are also held there.

All Advice Forum attendees should be listed on this website. [A Directory listing form is included with these minutes](#) for completion if you wish your organisation to be included on the website.

We are keen to increase referrals from Advice Station to Advice Forum attendees. Please contact Mandy Goodall (mandy.goodall@hflaw.org.uk) to be part of the referral system.

4. Immigration – Legal aid and chargeable work

Surinder Matharu, Immigration Solicitor, H&F Law Centre gave an immigration update.

The Law Centre provides free legal help and representation in the following areas:

- Asylum
- Domestic violence - for those on a spouse visa
- Domestic violence - dependants of European nationals
- Trafficking work

The Law Centre now offers a fixed fee service on a range of immigration matters. [A fee schedule is included with these minutes.](#)

5. Standing Together (Mental health partnership) Presentation, Sally Jackson, Standing Together Against Domestic Violence

Standing Together is a new project which aims to improve the quality and co-ordination of work between mental health services and domestic violence services. Many people experiencing abuse are likely to have mental health issues and a recent review of deaths through domestic violence shows that often there are mental health issues with either the victim or the perpetrator.

In the past, engagement with and working together by MH and DV organisations has been limited and this project seeks to address that.

Standing Together will be developing a Steering Group in the coming months. If anyone is interested in being involved they should email Sally (s.jackson@standingtogether.org.uk) for more information.

Year 1 of the project will consist of training in awareness and signposting and working with specialist support. Free training will be available and Sally will send training dates via the Advice Forum.

Additionally, Standing Together are part of a new tri-borough service where a client's details are collected at point of presentation and then referred on to the most appropriate agency. This service will be live from July 2015.

To find out more: <http://www.standingtogether.org.uk/>

We had some discussion around Easement of Condition for victims of domestic violence.

(The JSADV Easement provides a specific easement from job seeking conditions for Jobseeker's Allowance claimants who are victims of actual or threatened domestic violence. This means an exemption from job seeking conditions and requirements to be actively looking for employment for an initial 4 week period providing certain conditions are met, which can extend to a total of 13 weeks where relevant evidence is provided).

Follow this link for more information:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/jobseekers-allowance-domestic-violence-easement-and-destitute-domestic-violence-concession-implementation-rr843>

6. One Year on, Councillor Sue Fennimore, Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion

Sue distributed copies of the H&F Council booklet that highlights achievements and shows plans going forward. The booklet can be accessed via this link:

http://issuu.com/hammersmithandfulhamcouncil/docs/hf_council_budget-201516-a5/1

Highlights include:

- Policy and evaluation committees are focused on working with people - more community consultation
- Housing Strategy is going forward
- Extra £50 million achieved by renegotiating property deals
- Environmental health – tackling and prosecuting rogue landlords
- Evictions – scrutiny on these with aim to stop them
- Focus on digital inclusion
- New Foodbank site opening in August 2015
- Joining up services continues to be key
- Discussions with Shelter to talk about a National Homelessness Conference to be held in H&F.

7. Round table update and discussion

Staying First (Sarah Makhoul)

Staying First deliver debt and welfare benefit advice to clients in particular Housing Associations

Action on Disability (Tom Kenny)

AoD provide welfare benefit advice up to tribunal level. Where AoD have handled ESA claims from the start, they have had a 100% success rate at work capability assessments.

Main problem at the moment is Mandatory Considerations. Some people have no money for 4 – 6 weeks.

Housing Partnership and Enabling, Housing Options Division, LBHF (Zahra Beg)

Currently working on Housing Allocation and Homelessness prevention. Still much work to be done around the Care Act.

HF CAB (Joy Paul)

The CAB is piloting the Affordability Project with LBHF. Housing officers can refer clients directly to the CAB (new post has been created). No referrals or self-referrals are possible just yet but this will hopefully follow on.

Dr Edward's and Bishop King's Fulham Charity (DEBK)

Our local Fulham based charity is looking for new trustees. [A trustee flyer is included with the minutes.](#) To find out more about being a trustee with DEBK, please contact Jonathan Martin:

e: clerk@debk.org.uk

t: 020 7386 9387.

8. Dates of next meetings

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

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

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

Please note there will be NO meeting in July or August.