

Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers - Summary Audit Report

April 2010

Linkwide - Advice Team

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1 INTRODUCTION AND AUDIT OUTCOME

The Advice Team is part of Linkwide Ltd. which is part of the Link Group, a charitable Industrial and Provident Society and a Registered Social Landlord with the Scottish Housing Regulator.

Linkwide Ltd. promotes inclusion, tackles inequalities in society, contributes to Scotland's broader social justice agenda, and delivers projects and services to those most in need.

It achieves this by:-

1. Developing housing for Link Group
2. Working with local communities to develop a range of sustainable social inclusion/'wider action' initiatives
3. Providing a range of Advice Services that include Welfare Rights, Money Advice and an Older Persons' Advice Service.

The remit of the Advice Team is:

- In line with aim 3 (above), to provide welfare rights, benefits, money and debt advice and older peoples' specific services to tenants of Link Group and to tenants in Falkirk Council worst 30% SIMD (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) areas as well as tenants of the older peoples' service partners.

1.1 AUDIT OUTCOME

The on-site audit visit took place during 21 & 22 January 2010.

Following the audit visit, it was concluded that the advice service provided by the Linkwide Advice Team was Not Yet Fully Compliant with the requirements of the Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers (the Standards). This decision was reached on the basis that the agency's case file review and supervision procedure did not meet the requirements of the Standards.

An Action Plan was agreed and Linkwide has since entered into a formal arrangement with an external agency to provide independent money advice file review and supervision services. This arrangement satisfactorily meets the requirements of the Standards and the agency can now be accredited.

Linkwide Advice Team is accredited to the Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers in the topics and for the types of service shown below until January 2014.

Money and welfare benefits topics accredited

TOPIC	Topics Applied for	Topics Accredited to
4.1 Means-Tested Benefits	III	III
4.2 Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit	III	III
4.3 Tax Credits	III	III
4.4 The Social Fund	III	III
4.5 The Impact of Work on Benefits	III	III
4.6 Child Benefit and Guardian's Allowance	II	II
4.7 State Retirement Pension	II	II
4.8 Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance	III	III
4.9 Benefits for People who are Incapable of Work	III	III
4.10 Benefits for Work-Related Illnesses and Disabilities	II	II
4.11 Benefits for Veterans	II	II
4.12 Carer's Allowance	II	II
4.13 Jobseeker's Allowance	III	III
4.14 Benefits for Maternity, Paternity and Adoption	II	II
4.15 Bereavements Benefit	II	II
4.16 Benefits for People in Public Care	II	II
4.17 Benefits for Students	II	II
4.18 Benefits for People from Abroad and/or who are Subject to Immigration Control	II	II
4.19 Ancillary Benefits	II	II
4.20 Financial Statements	III	II
4.21 Liability for Debts, Extortionate Credit, Unfair Contract Terms, Unenforceable Debts, Creditor Malpractice, Codes of Practice, etc	III	II
4.22 Identifying and Agreeing Options in Debt Cases	III	II
4.23 Negotiating and Making Offers to Creditors	III	II

4.24 Diligence, Diligence Stoppers and Court Proceedings	III	II
4.25 Bankruptcy and Sequestration, Voluntary Trust Deeds	III	II
4.26 Recalls and Appeals against Court Decrees and Orders	III	II
4.27 Utility Debts	III	II
4.28 Local and National Tax Debts	III	II
4.29 Rent Arrears	III	II
4.30 Mortgages and Secured Loans	III	II
4.31 Civil and Criminal fines and other Financial Penalties	III	II
4.32 Business Debts	II	II

2 AUDIT FINDINGS

2.1 REQUIREMENTS

a) Money advice case checking

Requirement: That the agency should enter into a formal arrangement with an external money advice agency working to verifiable levels of competence whereby a representative sample of new cases opened per quarter, perhaps 10% or so, should be sent off for external checking. Associated protocols and procedures should be devised, in addition to case checking and feedback templates. (**Standard:** 5.5, 5.6)

This requirement has now been satisfied. See Appendix

3.1 AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS - Processes

a) Review of policies and procedures

Recommendation: A 'Policies' policy should be drafted detailing where responsibility lay for the drafting and review of policies within the Linkwide Advice Team. (**Standard:** 1.2 Key Indicator 2).

This recommendation has now been satisfied. See Appendix