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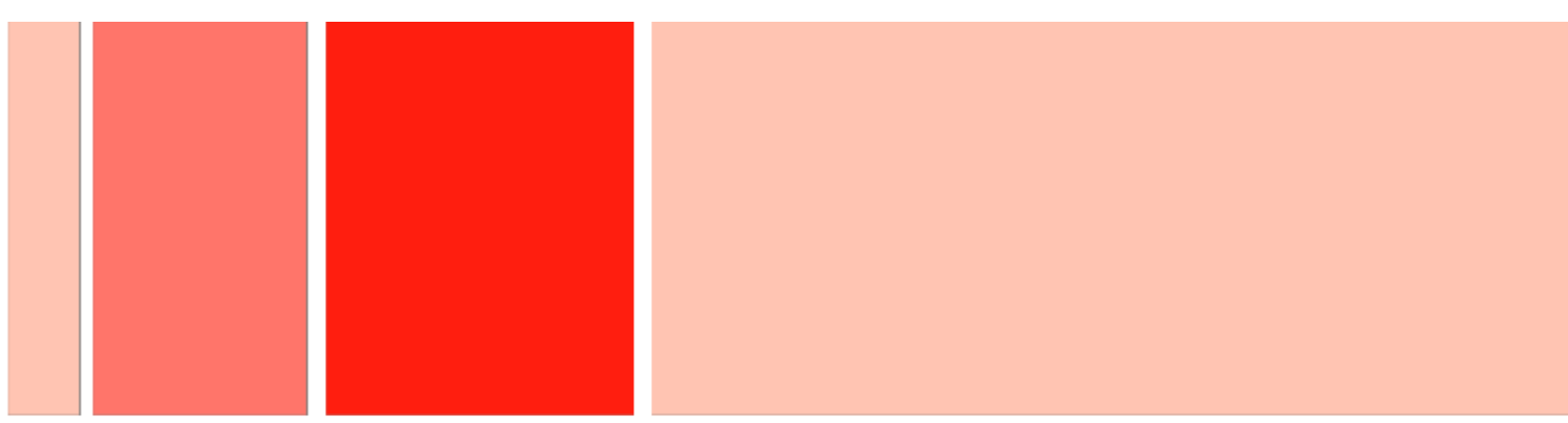
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# Evaluation of Front Line Advice Services Grant (FLASG)

## Final Report



Evaluation of Front Line Advice Services Grant (FLASG)  
Final Report

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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## **Glossary**

| <b>Acronym</b> | <b>Definition</b>                      |
|----------------|--|
| BABL           | Better Advice, Better Lives            |
| BME            | Black and Minority Ethnic              |
| CAB            | Citizens Advice Bureaux                |
| CPI            | Consumer Price Index                   |
| DWP            | Department for Work and Pensions       |
| DLA            | Disability Living Allowance            |
| ESA            | Employment Support Allowance           |
| EHRC           | Equalities and Human Rights Commission |
| EASS           | Equality Advisory Support Services     |
| FLASG          | Front Line Advice Services Grant       |
| FTE            | Full Time Equivalent                   |
| IAPF           | Independent Advice Providers Forum     |
| IB             | Incapacity Benefit                     |
| JSA            | Jobseekers Allowance                   |
| KPI            | Key Performance Indicators             |
| LSC            | Legal Services Commission              |
| PIPs           | Personal Independence Payments         |
| RPI            | Retail Price Index                     |
| RNIB           | Royal National Institute for the Blind |

# 1. Introduction

## Background

- 1.1 Old Bell 3 Ltd. was commissioned by the Welsh Government in October 2015 to undertake an evaluation of the Front Line Advice Services Grant (FLASG).
- 1.2 FLASG was introduced as a new three year funding scheme to support front line advice services across Wales during 2014-15. The former Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty, Jeff Cuthbert AM, initially announced in April 2015 that annual funding of £1 million would be available for the scheme but funding was subsequently doubled to £2 million during July of that year.
- 1.3 Following an open bidding process, FLASG funding was awarded in October 2015 across four agreements: two with local Citizens Advice (through Citizens Advice Cymru) - of which one was in partnership with SNAP Cymru and one was in partnership with Shelter Cymru - and one each with Tenovus Cancer Care and Age Cymru.

## Evaluation Aims and Objectives

- 1.4 The aim of this evaluation was to conduct a process and outcome review of FLASG. In particular, the evaluation was expected to review the extent to which FLASG was meeting its stated purposes, including:
  - mitigating the impact of welfare reform
  - tackling poverty, inequality and social and financial exclusion
  - generating a higher level of awareness amongst generalist advice providers of equality and discrimination issues
  - providing support on equality and discrimination issues
  - encouraging greater collaboration between advice providers
  - developing better integration of services on the ground
  - developing a more common understanding of quality standards.
- 1.5 The evaluation was also expected to identify the effects of the intervention upon beneficiaries and provide a better understanding of the type of advice sought and provided, who received it, what issues they were supported with, how they learnt about and perceive the services, what actions the advice prompted them to take, and to what effect. The review was expected to consider:
  - the nature and quality of the administrative data gathered/collated on those seeking/receiving advice

- the nature and quality of the advice provided and any subsequent work to assist people to act on such advice
- how the organisations receiving the grant are surveying their clients' views on the experience and effects of receiving their advice
- the basis for, and appropriateness of, the targets funded organisations are expected to meet e.g. the proportion of recipients in defined 'rural' localities, proportion with disabilities etc.
- the administrative structures, resources employed and costs of supplying the services funded
- the suitability and implementation of the reporting systems in place
- the extent of the expressed demand for such advice vis-à-vis supply via these funded agencies and other sources.<sup>1</sup>

## **Method**

1.6 This final evaluation report is based on a work programme undertaken between October 2015 and January 2016 which involved:

- attending an initial meeting with the client to agree the research methodology for the evaluation
- undertaking initial telephone scoping interviews with key individuals based at five FLASG funded organisations
- developing a simple logic model to explain the programme logic for the grant scheme
- undertaking a detailed literature review of key documents and information relating to FLASG and the services funded by it
- undertaking a light-touch policy review to establish the context within which FLASG has been delivered
- developing a series of semi structured discussion guides to inform interviews with FLASG funded organisations, Welsh Government officials, other key stakeholders and undertaking a package of fieldwork with these contributors (set out in detail at Annex A)
- developing a semi structured discussion guide to inform interviews with FLASG beneficiaries.

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<sup>1</sup> Welsh Government Specification for: Evaluation of Front Line Advice Services Grant p.6-7

1.7 A total of 40 interviews were undertaken with FLASG supported beneficiaries between late November 2015 and early January 2016. The profile of beneficiaries interviewed is set out at Table 1.1:

**Table 1.1: Profile of beneficiaries interviewed**

| Method                | Issues covered            | Number of interviewees |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Citizens Advice Cymru | Welfare Benefits          | 14                     |
|                       | Debt/Financial Capability |                        |
| Shelter Cymru         | Housing and Homelessness  | 6                      |
| Citizens Advice Cymru | Discrimination            | 7                      |
| SNAP Cymru            | Discrimination            | 3                      |
| Tenovus Cancer Care   | Welfare Benefits          | 5                      |
| Age Cymru             | Welfare Benefits          | 5                      |
|                       | Debt/Financial Capability |                        |
| Total                 |                           | 40                     |

Source: Old Bell 3 interviews. Base=40.

1.8 Interviews were conducted with clients from across sixteen Welsh local authority areas<sup>2</sup>.

1.9 In terms of the demographic profile of beneficiaries who were interviewed:

- Two-thirds (24 interviewees) were women and a third (16 interviewees) were men
- They ranged in age from 24 to 78 years of age, with the average age being 55<sup>3</sup>. Interviewees supported by Tenovus Cancer Care and Age Cymru were on average older than those supported via the two other funding agreements
- Two of the interviewees considered Welsh to be their first language and another two were from a Minority Ethnic background
- The majority (34 interviewees) considered themselves to have a long term illness and all but one thought that their long term illness affected their ability to work

<sup>2</sup> These local authority areas were Anglesey, Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Cardiff, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Newport, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire, Powys, Swansea, Torfaen and Wrexham. In addition one interviewee was also now living outside of Wales.

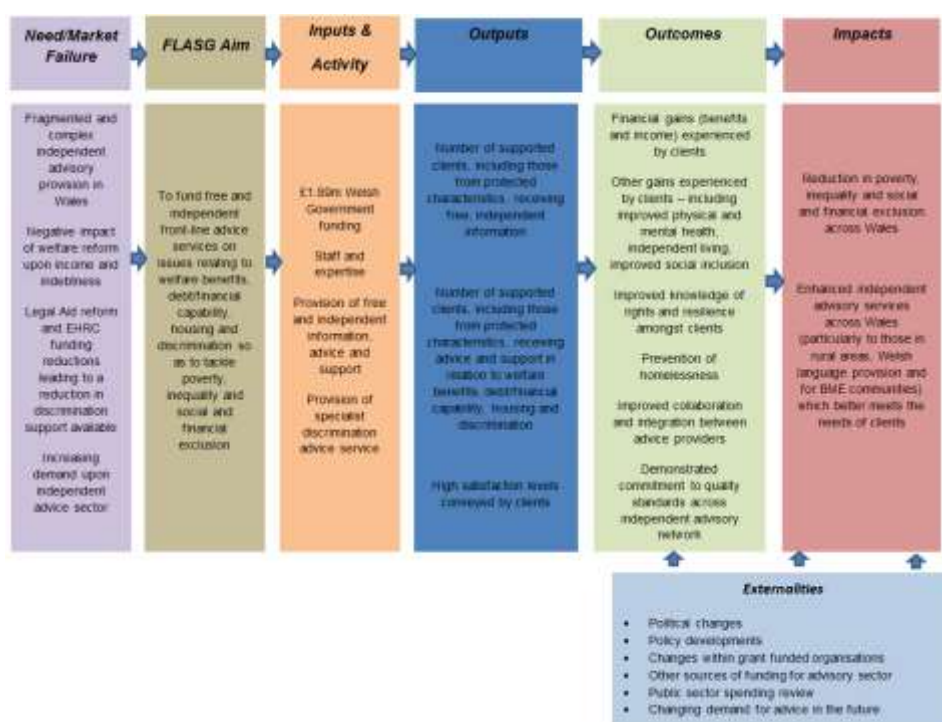
<sup>3</sup> Based on responses from 39 interviewees.



- Just over half (21 interviewees) considered their health to be poor, eight considered their health to be fair, seven considered their health to be good whilst the remaining four thought their health to be either very good or excellent.

1.10 The logic model for FLASG, developed as part of this evaluation to understand the underlying assumptions for the scheme and to measure the outcomes and impacts achieved, is presented at Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 FLASG Logic Model



Source: Old Bell 3 Ltd

## Structure of this report

1.11 In the remainder of this report, we firstly consider the policy context for FLASG (Chapter 2) before discussing the aims and objectives of the scheme (Chapter 3) and its underlying rationale, need and design (Chapter 4). We then present and discuss the implementation model for FLASG and the nature of the provision made available (Chapter 5). Chapter 6 considers FLASG's achievements and performance whilst Chapter 7 discusses the difference made to beneficiaries and the advisory network. Chapter 8 presents the views of contributors on the future needs and priorities of the information and advice sector in Wales. Finally, at Chapter 9, we present our conclusions and propose recommendations for the future.

## 2. The policy context

### Introduction

- 2.1 The Advice Services Review<sup>4</sup> undertaken by the Welsh Government and published in March 2013 highlighted the complex, even fragmented nature of the provision of independent advice by not-for-profit providers to individuals across Wales. The Review also outlined the evidence base for public investment in these services as a way of preventing increased costs to the public sector from escalating problems (e.g. in terms of homelessness and mental illness) where these are not addressed early enough. Furthermore, the Review made clear the Welsh Government's firm policy commitment to supporting such advice. This is reflected, for example, in the fact that the first objective of the Strategic Equality Plan 2012 - 2016 is to strengthen advice, information and advocacy services to help people understand and exercise their rights, make informed choices and challenge discrimination.
- 2.2 The Review was commissioned in the context of a number of emerging challenges, particularly those flowing from the UK Government's fiscal policy, notably the impact of welfare reform, cuts in legal aid services and reductions in the advice and case-work provided by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) in respect of cases of discrimination. To consider these in turn:

### Welfare Reform

- 2.3 The Review outlined the likely negative impact in terms of income and indebtedness on poor and vulnerable individuals and families from the changes to the welfare system introduced by the previous UK Coalition Government, which in turn was expected to lead to an increased demand for advice related to welfare benefits, debt and financial capability (which already in 2012/13 together accounted for some 73% of all cases dealt with by Citizens Advice Cymru, for example)<sup>5</sup>. These changes included:
- the introduction of a much less generous support regime for those not working because of disabilities or health conditions with the replacement of Incapacity Benefit (IB) and Disability Living Allowance (DLA) with the Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and Personal Independence Payments (PIP)
  - freezing child benefit and limiting increases of most working-age benefits to 1% each year

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<sup>4</sup> *Advice Services Review: Final Research Report*, Welsh Government, 2013

<sup>5</sup> *Citizens Advice Cymru, Annual Review 2012/13*. Citizens Advice Cymru, 2014

- the use of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) in place of Retail Price Index (RPI) as the basis for uprating benefits in general
- a cap on the maximum amount any household relying on state benefits could receive
- the introduction of the 'spare room subsidy' or bedroom tax and other changes to restrict the levels of housing benefit paid.

2.4 Research commissioned by the Welsh Government<sup>6</sup> highlighted the likely negative effects of these changes, which it was estimated would lead to a direct loss of income (excluding Universal Credit) of £590 million to Welsh families in 2014/15<sup>7</sup>. The changes were expected to impact particularly on the lower half of the income distribution. For the poorest decile, in the absence of the roll out of Universal Credit, the changes were expected to lead to a loss of an average of just over £11 per week or 3.5% of family income, while for the worst affected part of the population - the fourth poorest decile - average losses were expected to average nearly £12 per week or 4% of family income<sup>8</sup>. Sharp cuts to in-work benefits meant that working families on low incomes were likely to be significantly affected, particularly where only one partner in a couple with children was working (with losses of over £30 per week or 5.5% of family income excluding Universal Credit). However, the changes were expected also to result in very significant losses to non-working families with children (with average losses of over £20 per week or 5% of income) and lone non-working parents (with losses of around £17 per week or nearly 6% of income)<sup>9</sup>.

2.5 These findings were echoed by separate research (undertaken on a somewhat different basis<sup>10</sup>) by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research at Sheffield Hallam University, which highlighted the extent to which (reflecting different levels of welfare dependency) the changes were likely to impact disproportionately severely on poorer regions of the UK such as Wales<sup>11</sup>. Indeed, work undertaken by the Centre and published after the Advice Review, looked more specifically at the impact of the reforms on the Welsh Valleys<sup>12</sup>. The research

<sup>6</sup> *Analysing the Impact of the UK Government's Welfare Reforms in Wales - Stage 2 Analysis*: Welsh Government, February 2013

<sup>7</sup> *An ex-ante analysis of the effects of the UK Government's welfare reforms on labour supply in Wales* Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2013. p. 32

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 34-5

<sup>10</sup> The CRESR analysis takes into account the impact of changes to incapacity benefit announced by the previous Labour Government, as well as the impact of changes introduced by the Coalition Government in the 2012 Welfare Reform Act, whereas the Welsh Government analysis focuses only on the latter.

<sup>11</sup> *Hitting the Poorest Places Hardest: the local and regional impact of welfare reform*: CRESR, Sheffield Hallam University, 2013.

<sup>12</sup> *The Impact of Welfare Reform on the Valleys*: CRESR, Sheffield Hallam University, 2014

suggested that total losses from welfare reforms to households in the Valleys would be of the order of £430 million per annum, with 135,000 households affected by changes to Child Benefit, 91,000 by changes to tax credits, 43,000 by changes to incapacity benefits, 28,000 by changes to Disability Living Allowance, 25,000 by general changes to Housing Benefit (excluding the ‘bedroom tax’) and 15,000 by the so-called ‘Bedroom Tax’<sup>13</sup>. This report illustrated starkly the differential impact of welfare reform on incomes in different parts of the UK and Wales, as shown in Table 2.1<sup>14</sup>.

**Table 2.1: Estimated financial loss per annum per adult of working age from welfare reform**

| Area  | £      |
|---|--------|
| Great Britain (average)                         | £470   |
| South-East England                              | £370   |
| Wales (average)                                 | £550   |
| South Wales Valleys (average)                   | £650   |
| Worst-affected local authority (Merthyr Tydfil) | £720   |
| Worst affected ward (Maerdy, Rhondda Cynon Taf) | £1,050 |

Source: Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research

- 2.6 While the focus of the Sheffield Hallam team was more on the overall economic impact of the reforms regionally and locally, the figures presented in Table 2.1 suggest that these changes were likely to adversely affect the incomes of those most dependent on state support.
- 2.7 More recent evidence (albeit at a UK level) suggest that problems with indebtedness have increased significantly in the last three years. Recently published research suggests that the number of over-indebted households (paying more than 25 per cent of their gross income to creditors, excluding mortgages) increased by more than 28 per cent to 3.2 million between 2012 and 2014, with lower income groups and the long term sick and disabled particularly severely affected. Indeed, this research also estimated that there were over 1.1 million UK households, with

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.15

<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that because of the fact that some of the reforms were to be applied to individuals and some to households, the methodology used by CRESR was to aggregate the financial impact of the losses from all the in-scope reforms at different geographical levels and then average these across the working age population while recognising that ‘This is a loss averaged across the *wholepopulation* of these wards, including non-claimants’.

incomes of less than £30,000 per year, which were paying over 40 per cent of their gross income to creditors before taking account of housing costs<sup>15</sup>.

## **Legal Aid**

2.8 The Advice Services Review pointed to the likely impact of Legal Aid reforms introduced by the UK Coalition government from April 2013 in an effort to reduce costs, which severely cut back the issues where specialist advice could be funded by legal aid, removing, for example, employment cases, housing and debt cases (except where the home was at immediate risk), and almost all cases relating to welfare benefits. This was estimated to lead, amongst other things, to a reduction in the number of face-to-face advice sessions related to social welfare law in Wales by some 75%, with Citizen Advice Bureaux expected to lose around 42 FTE specialist case-workers and to a reduction of a minimum of 5.5 FTE specialist housing advisors employed by Shelter Cymru and previously funded by legal aid work. Indeed, these anticipated cuts resulted in an actual reduction in Legal Services Commission (LSC) funding to Citizens Advice Cymru from £1.8 million in 2012/13 to £300,000 in 2013/14<sup>16</sup>.

## **Discrimination Advice**

2.9 The Advice Services Review noted that the UK Government had also instructed the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to reduce its grant funding in support of specialist advice on discrimination from March 2012 which was leading to a reduction in access in Wales to such advice.

2.10 In the context of these challenges and what the Review team saw as the need for greater co-ordination between different providers of advice, the Review put forward a comprehensive set of recommendations which included:

- establishing a National Advice Network to ensure strategic co-ordination of advice services and supporting the creation (on the basis of existing networks and fora) of local and regional advice networks, with the aim of improving co-ordination between different providers, mitigating the impact of welfare reform, disseminating good practice and developing common quality standards
- ensuring good internal co-ordination within the Welsh Government of its approach to commissioning advice services and prioritising support to the not-for-

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<sup>15</sup> *Britain in the Red: Provisional Report*: Centre for Responsible Credit, September 2015

<sup>16</sup> *Citizens Advice Cymru, Annual Review 2012/13*: Citizens Advice Cymru, 2014 and *Citizens Advice Cymru, Annual Review 2013/14*: Citizens Advice Cymru, 2015

profit sector to mitigate the impact of Welfare Reform and Legal Aid Reform and to develop an all Wales service to provide specialist discrimination advice

- continuing to support advice provided by a range of channels (face-to-face, telephone and online)
- improving commissioning practice, by focusing on outcomes rather than outputs and providing, where possible, longer-term funding agreements.

2.11 The Review - and further discussion with providers, including an influential response from the Independent Advice Providers Forum (IAPF)<sup>17</sup> which broadly endorsed the Review's recommendations, while arguing that generally good relations already existed between providers and that developing common quality standards should be a long-term not an immediate goal - led to the decision by Ministers to earmark additional funding in the form of the FLASG (in principle) for three years from 2014/15.

2.12 In essence, the policy intention behind the Grant scheme was twofold:

- on the one hand, to support advice services which could mitigate the effects of welfare reform and which could address the identified gaps in terms of specialist discrimination advice. In other words, to directly increase the provision of front-line services over and above what would have been available in the absence of the grant (while recognising that the Welsh Government could not realistically intervene to completely fill the gap created by the withdrawal of Legal Services Commission funding)
- on the other, to also advance the broader agenda laid out in the Review of increasing collaboration, partnership and networking between advice providers and moving towards a more common approach to quality standards. This was reflected in the Welsh Government encouraging collaborative proposals to be put forward for FLASG funding.

2.13 While the FLASG was introduced as a response to the Review, it is also important to appreciate that it by no means represents the entirety of the support provided by the Welsh Government to the provision of independent advice. Rather the grant is in addition to the £2.2 million p.a. '*Better Advice, Better Lives*' funding made available to Citizens Advice Cymru by the Welsh Government since 2012/13<sup>18</sup> (and now

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<sup>17</sup> *Review of Advice Services in Wales: Response produced by the Independent Advice Providers Forum:* IAPF, October 2013

<sup>18</sup> Funding was initially made available via Better Advice Better Health in 2001

extended at least until March 2016<sup>19</sup>), which in part at least is also explicitly intended to support Citizens Advice Bureaux with the means to provide advice on welfare and benefits related issues. Citizens Advice is also a Lead Delivery Body for a project providing debt, benefits and financial capability advice on an outreach basis in partnership with the 36 Communities First Clusters. Similarly, Shelter Cymru Live, Shelter's advice service is funded both via the Grant and via separate funding from the Welsh Government's Homelessness Grant Programme<sup>20</sup>. Moreover, Welsh Government support is over and above other sources of funding available to support independent advice on these issues. These include local authority funding and contractual funding via the Money Advice Service, which amounted to £1.6 million in 2013/14<sup>21</sup>, as well as other funded services such as the Energy Best Deal and Pensionwise.

- 2.14 In terms of funding, the Welsh Local Government Association has forecast that there will be a shortfall in the region of some £900 million in local authorities' budgets by 2019/20<sup>22</sup>. With local government still contributing, for example, some 40 per cent of Citizens Advice Bureaux' funding<sup>23</sup>, this is likely to have an on-going impact on the sustainability of these services.
- 2.15 Analysis by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation<sup>24</sup> of the changes to working-age benefits, in particular the reduction in tax credits alongside the introduction of the 'National living wage' suggests that while some groups on low incomes will be better off, the majority will actually see living standards fall still further. This analysis, looking at likely changes in living standards between 2010 and 2020 concludes that:

*'Families on out-of-work benefits will typically have only half the income they need by 2020, compared with two-thirds in 2010. For working households, the NLW will bring important gains, especially to those without children and full-time working couples. However, most working families will be net losers. In particular, a big shortfall between income and need will open up for many working lone parents.'*

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<sup>19</sup> Welsh Government Press Release, 17 December 2014

<sup>20</sup> Shelter Cymru Press Release, 17 July 2015: <http://sheltercymru.org.uk/shelter-cymru-live-advice-when-you-need-it/>

<sup>21</sup> *Citizens Advice Cymru, Annual Review 2013/14*: Citizens Advice Cymru, 2015

<sup>22</sup> WLGA Press Release, 7 September 2015 <http://www.wlga.gov.uk/media-centre-l-wlga-e-bulletins/wlga-warns-councils-are-in-the-dark-on-uk-government-spending-plans>

<sup>23</sup> *Citizens Advice Cymru, Annual Review 2013/14*: Citizens Advice Cymru, 2015

<sup>24</sup> *Will the 2015 Summer Budget Improve Living Standards in 2020*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation, September 2015. It should be noted that this study was undertaken before the partial reversal of UK Government policy announced in the Autumn Statement on 25 November 2015. However, since this change of policy only defers rather than cancels the reduction in in-work benefits the overall conclusion is likely to remain broadly accurate.

### 3. FLASG aims and objectives

#### Introduction

- 3.1 This chapter draws on a review of project related documentation and sets out the background to the FLASG funding scheme as well as its aims and objectives.

#### Background

- 3.2 In April 2014, the former Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty, Jeff Cuthbert AM, agreed funding of £1 million to support front line advice services in 2014-15, with indicative allocations of funding at the same level, for financial years 2015-16 and 2016-17. In July 2014, this fund was increased to £2 million for the 2014-15 financial year, representing the Welsh Government's commitment to supporting preventative action so people would be better equipped to take control of their own affairs and to access practical support to help them achieve this.

#### Aims and Objectives

- 3.3 The Welsh Government issued a call for applications in mid-May 2014<sup>25</sup> and specified that the purposes of FLASG would be to deliver 'free and independent, front line advice services on issues relating to welfare benefits, debt and/or financial capability, housing [and] discrimination'.<sup>26</sup> The specification also stated that the grant was considered to be 'a means of mitigating the impact of Welfare Reform' as well as 'to help tackle poverty and inequality and social and financial exclusion in Wales'. A particular emphasis was given to the need for funding an all-Wales specialist discrimination advice service across Wales and some £300,000 of funding was earmarked for this purpose.
- 3.4 The specification noted that FLASG was intended to respond to many of the key recommendations made by the Advice Services Review as well as the additional proposals offered in response to the review by the Independent Advice Providers Forum. Applicants were therefore asked to specify how they intended to meet three of these key underlying themes, namely by providing:
- services which would improve collaboration between advice providers: in this respect it was stated that collaborative bids would be welcomed
  - services which would lead to better integration of services on the ground
  - services which met accredited quality standards.

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<sup>25</sup> *Welsh Government funding for front-line advice services 2014-2017 Application Guidance* Welsh Government (May 2014)

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2



- 3.5 The availability of FLASG was restricted to providers who could demonstrate that they were not-for-profit, independent and acting in the client's sole interest (thereby excluding any organisations who had a vested interest in supporting the client such as credit unions or housing associations)<sup>27</sup>. Providers also had to demonstrate that they were quality assured (in that they either already operated to a recognised quality standard or were actively working towards one). In addition, the specification stated that applicants would be scored according to their ability to 'deliver advice on a consistent basis all over Wales'; to accommodate the needs of specific groups (namely people with protected characteristics, those living in more rural areas, the digitally excluded and people with specific language needs including the Welsh language); and to demonstrate evidence of need for their proposed services.
- 3.6 Finally, the call for applications issued by the Welsh Government asked bidders to suggest appropriate performance measures which would be adopted to measure the performance of the services funded. These measures were expected to be both quantitative and qualitative in nature, such as the number of clients advised, the value of income gains experienced by clients and the value of personal debt managed or written off.
- 3.7 Applicants were given a four-week window to submit their responses and were required to do so by mid-June 2014.
- 3.8 In all, 36 applications were received and scored by a panel of Welsh Government officials. Four services were given funding agreements<sup>28</sup> confirmed during October 2014, namely:
- Citizens Advice Cymru and Shelter Cymru to deliver specialist advice on welfare benefits, housing and debt
  - Citizens Advice Cymru and SNAP Cymru to deliver specialist discrimination advice across the full range of protected characteristics
  - Age Cymru to deliver information and advice services for older people and their carers
  - Tenovus Cancer Care to deliver information and advice services to cancer patients and their families.
- 3.9 Funding was awarded for the 2014/15 financial year and organisations were allowed to claim retrospectively for costs associated with delivery (including staff and overhead costs) as from 1 April 2014. Each funding agreement set programme

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p.11

<sup>28</sup> A single funding agreement was issued to cover the two services which were led by Citizens Advice

outputs<sup>29</sup> which organisations were required to achieve in relation to the delivery of front line advice services.

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<sup>29</sup> Discussed in Chapter 6 of this report

## 4. Rationale, Need and Design

### Introduction

- 4.1 This chapter draws upon the findings from the evaluation fieldwork with FLASG funded organisations, stakeholders and Welsh Government officials in relation to the funding scheme's rationale, need, design and fit with other sources of funding available to the independent advisory sector in Wales.

### Rationale

- 4.2 The majority of contributors to this evaluation argued that the FLASG funding scheme had been established with the objective of putting in place a more 'strategic' and 'co-ordinated' approach to funding the independent advice sector in Wales. By comparison with its predecessor model, which had provided funding to a greater number of providers, some contributors argued that FLASG was more ambitious in that its goals were broader than merely addressing the funding gaps which had resulted from LSC cuts-backs.
- 4.3 Many contributors also stressed that FLASG represented an effort to respond to the recommendations of the Advice Services Review and in particular its recommendation that there was a need to increase resources for the independent advice sector in Wales to compensate for the loss of various sources of other funding, including LSC and EHRC<sup>30</sup>. One such commentator noted that 'FLASG has by no means completely addressed the loss of LSC funding but it's tried to fill some of the gap left'. Indeed, another suggested that FLASG, whilst a very welcome funding scheme is 'barely touching the surface' and according to the IAPF's estimations, FLASG investment is only providing a 'tenth of what is actually needed'.
- 4.4 Despite this it was suggested that FLASG has been critical to 'maintaining the skill-set' across the sector. Several voiced their concerns that specialist expertise would have been lost completely had the funding not been put in place, particularly in light of on-going budget cuts.
- 4.5 Several contributors noted that FLASG had also attempted to take on board those recommendations made within the Advice Services Review to increase collaboration across the sector and to work towards a common approach to quality standards, given that these had been specific requirements of the application process.

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<sup>30</sup> The EHRC's helpline closed in 2012 and clients are directed to the Equality Advisory Support Services (EASS)

4.6 It was also widely accepted that there had been a need for FLASG in order to better equip the sector to support individuals affected by the UK Government's Welfare Reform Programme and to help mitigate these effects as far as possible by helping beneficiaries maximise their income and improve their money management skills.

#### **Comparison with predecessor scheme**

4.7 Most contributors thought that FLASG represented an improvement on the previous funding model which had been in place via the 'consequential funding' awarded by the Welsh Government<sup>31</sup>. It was suggested that the main strengths of FLASG were its three-year funding cycle which offers medium-term income security for funded organisations as well as the transparency of the application process. Others also welcomed the fact that Welsh Government officials, rather than the IAPF, had been responsible for decision-making in relation to the award of funding agreements.

4.8 Several contributors, particularly from the Citizens Advice network and Shelter Cymru, were also eager to stress that FLASG funding was proving to be a much more flexible source of funding compared to LSC, despite the actual level of funding being lower. It was suggested that beneficiaries no longer had to 'jump through hoops' in order to satisfy LSC eligibility criteria before seeing an advisor which meant that beneficiaries were receiving a quicker and better service.

4.9 In the main contributors were broadly satisfied with the eligibility criteria adopted by the Welsh Government for awarding FLASG funding and took the view that these requirements had been appropriate. A small number of contributors raised some concerns however - non funded organisations in particular questioned whether the emphasis within the application guidance upon pan-Wales delivery had been appropriate, given that this effectively 'ruled out' localised providers who were often considered to have very good links with their communities and a good understanding of local needs. These contributors were concerned that the model would create 'a few monopolies ... there is a danger that you will lose the mixed-approach, the choice and specialism by only supporting one or two large providers'.

4.10 Another key issue, raised by at least three contributors, was that FLASG had been established within a relatively 'poorly informed context'. Specifically, these contributors argued that the Welsh policy context was still evolving and that FLASG could have benefited from having been better informed by a 'thorough mapping exercise of advice provision and needs' as well as a 'more advanced Welsh advice

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<sup>31</sup> Funding was available for a two year period previously and allocated by the UK Government to the Welsh Government to distribute to providers of front line advice providers as appropriate.

strategy'. Despite this, it was argued that 'the Welsh Government had done the best it could with the information it had at its disposal'. It was widely recognised at the time of our fieldwork that these issues were being addressed via the on-going mapping exercise overseen by the IAPF to help identify needs and gaps in provision and via the initial discussions to develop an Information and Advice Strategy for Wales so as to set the policy context for front line advice delivery.

### **Need**

- 4.11 Contributors were unanimous in their view that there had been a strong need for FLASG funding to support the independent advice sector - not least because demand for independent advice was outstripping supply. The main arguments put forward to justify the need for the scheme were two fold. On the one hand it was argued that there had been a large increase in demand for information and advice services amongst the general public, driven by a range of factors including welfare cuts, changes to the definition of what constituted homelessness (thereby increasing demand for housing support), an increase in the number of cancer cases and an increasingly ageing population. On the other hand, it was argued that funding for the independent advice sector generally had reduced significantly over recent years, particularly following cuts in LSC funding.
- 4.12 Most contributors thought that there had been a good alignment between what had been funded and the overall objectives of FLASG, particularly given that the provisions had included specialist support across the thematic areas of welfare benefits, debt, housing and discrimination. Several contributors also stressed that FLASG had been able to part fill the gap created with the loss of LSC funding, particularly in the case of Citizens Advice funding agreements (including the provision made available by Shelter Cymru).

### **Design, Coherence and Fit**

- 4.13 Generally, contributors thought that FLASG and the support which it provided for the independent advice sector fitted well with Welsh Government policies, including those focused on tackling poverty and financial inclusion. Several funded organisations argued that the funding was enabling them to adopt a more holistic approach to supporting clients than they previously had in place. Other funded organisations argued that FLASG funding was allowing them to undertake much more outreach work (e.g. home visits or drop-in surgeries at new locations) than

previously - in the case of two organisations for example it was noted that advisors were much better equipped to work with clients in harder to reach areas as a result.

- 4.14 The majority of contributors took the view that FLASG was well aligned with the Welsh Government's focus on early preventative interventions, albeit that some suggested aspects of the advisory services delivered as part of FLASG were in fact focused on dealing with 'emergency' work. For instance, one of the several that made this point argued that 'some of the specialist advice has really been about helping people deal with immediate crisis ... eviction from their home, bailiffs turning up ....'

#### **Fit with other sources of funding**

- 4.15 Contributors recognised that FLASG constituted a relatively small proportion of the overall funding which was currently being made available to support the work of the information and advice sector across Wales. In-tune with this view, funded organisations reported receiving a wide range of other funding sources including from local authorities, the BIG Lottery Fund, other Welsh Government grants, charitable funding, legacy funding as well as organisations' own fund-raising activities including retail. Despite these other sources, there was an unanimous view that FLASG was a critical and timely source of funding which had safeguarded provision.
- 4.16 Several contributors argued that the lack of a 'detailed mapping analysis' of both front line funding and provision across the sector currently made it challenging to comment upon the 'fit' of FLASG with other funding sources. The funded organisations stressed however that they had they were making genuine efforts to 'make the funding fit and work together'.
- 4.17 Our fieldwork revealed that the other sources of funding FLASG organisations receive to support their front line advisory includes:
- Citizens Advice Cymru and Local Citizens Advice have an annual income of circa £12.5 million with £5.47 million of this being made available by the Welsh Government (via BABL at £2.2 million, Communities First Shared Outcomes Fund at £1.58 million and FLASG at £1.69 million). Other income sources include the UK Government (including Money Advice Service) and local authorities
  - Shelter Cymru receives £750,000 from the Welsh Government's Homelessness Grant Programme, £175,000 from various Local Authorities

and £400,000 from the LSC. The annual FLASG funding available (£361,000) accounts for 42 per cent of its total available funding for front line advisory services

- SNAP Cymru can access up to £47,000 FLASG funding per year. This amount accounts for less than 5 per cent of its overall income (currently circa £700,000 per annum) with other sources of income primarily Local Authority and Families First
- Tenovus Cancer Care receives £105,000 FLASG funding which accounts for around 15 per cent of the organisation's spend on front line advisory services. The organisation does not receive any other statutory grant funding for these services but rather relies on fund-raising activities including income from retail and legacy sources
- At Age Cymru the total annual FLASG funding of £231,000 accounts for a very small proportion of Age Cymru's<sup>32</sup> £3m turnover (note that around half is retained centrally and the other half distributed between local Age Cymru organisations known as 'brand partners'). In the case of individual brand partners FLASG funding accounts for varying proportions of spend on information and advice services, e.g. 28 per cent in the case of Age Cymru Pembrokeshire.

4.18 In two of these cases (Shelter Cymru and Tenovus Cancer Care) FLASG funding is effectively 'merged' with other sources of funding to deliver one over-arching advisory service. The remit of advisors and the type of advice given (or their client outputs) is not dependent upon the funding source. It was suggested that having two different funding streams in place for one service does result in additional administrative work. For instance, in the case of Shelter Cymru extracting FLASG only outputs and reports from their client management system has to be done manually and can be a time consuming task.

4.19 In other cases, particularly across the Citizens Advice network, each funding source (e.g. FLASG, BABL, Communities First Shared Outcomes) has a set of specific and different output requirements. In the case of Citizens Advice for instance, advisors funded via BABL are required to work across outreach locations, principally at GP surgeries, whilst Communities First funded advisors are required to deliver support across Communities First clusters or areas. FLASG funding on the other hand

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<sup>32</sup> Not including the turnover of brand partners

enables Citizens Advice to increase its in-depth specialist advice on specific thematic areas of support, although it was generally acknowledged that these themes are also amongst the most frequently used in all settings regardless of the funding source. As a result, there is often similarity between the sorts of advice provided under different funding contracts.

- 4.20 Over the course of our evaluation we did not encounter any evidence to suggest that FLASG funding was being used to duplicate provision already available via other funded sources. Rather, it was widely asserted that whilst some organisations provided similar services to those available via other organisations, the demand upon these services was so great that there was never any concern of duplicating efforts or outputs. Perhaps this was particularly evident in the case of Tenovus Cancer Care, who deliver very similar support to Macmillan Cancer Care and other cancer charities, when they provide information and advice sessions on a drop-in basis at hospital and hospice settings. It was argued that the demand from clients was so great that there was never any real danger of either organisation targeting the same clients in these settings. It was also noted that Tenovus Cancer Care, unlike Macmillan Cancer Care, provide an all-Wales casework service, regardless of where the client lives.



## **5. Implementation Model**

### **Introduction**

- 5.1 This chapter discusses the findings from the evaluation fieldwork with FLASG funded organisations, stakeholders, Welsh Government officials and supported beneficiaries in relation to the FLASG application process, the set-up and delivery of provision and the management of funding across funded organisations. It also considers the nature of advice and support provided, and levels of satisfaction from the perspective of beneficiaries.

### **The application process**

- 5.2 Several contributors highlighted the ‘very tight timescales’ put in place by the Welsh Government for responding to the call for FLASG applications. Many of the stakeholders that gave evidence to the evaluation suggested that these timescales had restricted the extent to which ‘new, innovative and creative collaboration’ ideas between providers could have been developed. This was true in the case of Age Cymru, where brand partners would have appreciated a longer lead-in time to prepare a bid in light of the number of partners involved (although it is worth noting that FLASG was the first time partners had come together to prepare a joint pan-Wales bid). Funded organisations admitted to having either turned to other providers whom they were already working closely with or their own network to form a joint application given the pressing timescales involved.
- 5.3 The tight timescales were deemed to have been an issue for non-funded organisations and one such contributor added that although they had approached other providers to form a collective bid the short lead-in time had made it impossible for them to submit a joint bid.
- 5.4 The Welsh Government assessment process was thought to have taken much longer than expected, largely due to the need to elicit further information from those successful applicants following the Minister’s announcement that the amount of funding available for FLASG was being doubled. Whilst obviously welcomed by all concerned this late announcement to increase the level of funding available was raised as an issue by some funded organisations.
- 5.5 In the event, as FLASG funding was not awarded until October 2014, successful organisations had less than six months to put structures in place and spend the money allocated to them for the 2014/15 financial year. A few contributors commented upon the additional pressures this late announcement had created for

them in terms of staff recruitment and training as well as establishing appropriate project processes and systems.

- 5.6 A few contributors also drew attention to the fact that, given the timescales involved in approving funding applications, this current evaluation was being commissioned in what they saw as a very early point in the life-cycle of the funding as it was 'still very early days' to consider the effectiveness of newly introduced elements such as the national telephone helplines.

### **Delivery Structures**

- 5.7 The FLASG scheme is being managed by a small team within the Financial Inclusion Unit of the Welsh Government. All funded organisations expressed positive views about the administration of the scheme and the Welsh Government's management of it (once funding had been approved). Amongst the comments made were that Welsh Government officials adopted a 'pragmatic' and 'flexible' approach to the management of FLASG and had taken an 'open and mature' approach to its management, which was widely appreciated.
- 5.8 Our evaluation fieldwork revealed that FLASG funding currently supports close to 43 FTE posts across the five funded organisations. The majority of these postholders support clients on a face to face basis whilst a small number support clients on a remote basis - indeed FLASG funding has helped to establish and fund four 'new' call centres which focus specifically upon welfare, debt, housing and people aged 50 and over.
- 5.9 The service provisions established as a result of FLASG across each of the funded organisations are outlined below.

### **Age Cymru**

- 5.10 FLASG funding has been used to establish a national, bilingual multi-channel advice line at Age Cymru in Cardiff. The funding has been used to cover the set-up costs associated with this service as well as two full time advisory posts. The service commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 and since then Age Cymru has secured further non-Welsh Government funding to employ an additional two additional advisors.
- 5.11 Funding has also been made available to seven of the eight Age Cymru brand partners across Wales namely Powys, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, Afan Nedd, Carmarthenshire, Gwynedd a Môn and Gwent. Generally, the funding is being used to support the role of one additional advisor at each of these organisations and the focus of the work is on offering advisory services on an outreach basis, including

via home visits. In some areas a new advisory position has been created, in others a part time advisory position has been made full time and in other areas FLASG funding has been used to replace other sources of funding which either had been withdrawn or was under threat of being withdrawn.

- 5.12 Across the Age Cymru brand partners visited as part of this evaluation FLASG funding is being used to finance the role of one full time advisor and their associated costs (such as travel and expenses) as well as some organisational overhead costs. In both cases the funding has enabled the organisation to increase the capacity of their information and advisory services (e.g. from 1.6 to 2.6 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) at one organisation) and to provide an outreach service including home visits and attending surgery and information dissemination events.

### **Citizens Advice Cymru**

- 5.13 Citizens Advice Cymru, via its network of local Citizens Advice, is utilising FLASG funding to provide specialist advice on money management and debt, welfare, discrimination (in partnership with SNAP Cymru) and housing (in partnership with Shelter Cymru). Across Citizens Advice Cymru and Shelter Cymru, FLASG funding is being used to replace previous LSC funding to allow advisors to support beneficiaries on a face to face basis although new elements, notably the provisions of two national helplines - one for debt and one for welfare - as well as discrimination training for its staff have also been introduced.
- 5.14 Across the CAB network, FLASG funding is being used to fund a total of 21.7 FTE posts. Of these, 7.6 FTE debt advisory posts are based at seven local Citizens Advice (1.6 FTE of these forming the national debt helpline team based at Citizens Advice Powys), 7.6 FTE welfare benefits advisory posts at seven local Citizens Advice (again with 1.6 FTE of these at the national welfare helpline based at Citizens Advice Swansea Neath Port Talbot) and 6.5 FTE discrimination advisory and training posts based at three local Citizens Advice namely Flintshire, Newport and Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 5.15 In addition to these delivery posts, two FTE project management staff are also funded across the CAB network, Shelter Cymru and SNAP Cymru an additional two FTE.
- 5.16 Whilst most of the CAB services have been in place since the autumn of 2014, newer elements such as the specialist telephone support services were only introduced during spring 2015.

## **SNAP Cymru**

- 5.17 The relatively modest amount of FLASG funding is being used to safeguard SNAP Cymru's front line advice service. Whilst the funding provided equates to one FTE advisor it has not been specifically linked to the work of any dedicated advisor. Rather the funding is being 'pooled' to enable the organisation to deliver discrimination advice, support and case work pan-Wales including those counties where the organisation does not have a Service Level Agreement with the local authority to provide Parent Partnership Services<sup>33</sup>.
- 5.18 FLASG funding is enabling the organisation to continue its delivery of free advice and support to parents, children and young people who have, or may have, special educational needs or disabilities thereby supporting their inclusion within education. Support is made available on a face to face basis as well as via the organisation's telephone helpline.

## **Shelter Cymru**

- 5.19 FLASG funding is being used to reinforce the organisation's front line advisory provision, currently equating to 30 FTE, and provides funding for 7.6 FTE of these advisors. Funding is not attached to any particular advisor but rather 'pooled' across the organisation.
- 5.20 The funding has allowed Shelter Cymru to maintain its previous levels of front line advisory capacity - some of which would have been lost following the LSC cutbacks (the organisation experienced a 60% cut to its LSC funding). FLASG funding has effectively 'replaced nearly all' of the organisation's previous LSC funding and most importantly, enabled the organisation to continue its delivery of a pan-Wales service.
- 5.21 The FLASG funding is being used to support the face to face advisory work of housing advisors, who in some places, work on an outreach basis across the CAB network of offices - in effect six FTE posts are supported across 12 local authority areas. In addition, the funding has enabled the organisation to put in place a new remote support service which provides advice and information via telephone, website and e-mail thereby enabling pan-Wales service delivery. In all, 1.6 FTE posts are funded in this way.

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<sup>33</sup> SNAP Cymru has a Service Level Agreement to provide Parent Partnership Services in Wrexham, Flintshire and Pembrokeshire and a Service Level Agreement to provide formal disagreement resolution in Wrexham and Flintshire.

## Tenovus Cancer Care

- 5.22 FLASG funding has been used to safeguard the provision of front-line advice, effectively funding the equivalent of 2.5 FTE posts across the organisation's team of 17 advisors who deliver information and advice services. The posts which the FLASG funding contribute towards include three north Wales, one mid-Wales and two south east Wales based advisors. The grant also helps facilitate work being undertaken with Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups in Cardiff. The organisation's capacity to deliver services has been safeguarded as a result of FLASG funding as some posts would have come under threat over time given Tenovus Cancer Care's reliance upon charitable income sources and the lack of any other grant funding.
- 5.23 The funding is being used to part-finance<sup>34</sup> Tenovus Cancer Care advice services for anyone affected by cancer in Wales regarding welfare benefits with advisors offering a benefits check, advising on possible entitlements to benefits (including Personal Independence Payments (PIPs), Attendance Allowance and Macmillan Grants), providing assistance with form filing (including application for blue badges), liaising with third parties and appealing unfavourable decisions at tribunals. By maintaining its advisory capacity, the organisation has been able to establish a greater number of outreach locations.
- 5.24 As part of its advice services, Tenovus Cancer Care also operates a Freephone cancer support line from its offices in Cardiff which can be accessed 365 days per year.

## Establishing provision

- 5.25 Feedback from grant funded organisations and Welsh Government officials<sup>35</sup> suggested that the establishment and initial delivery of support via the FLASG grant (as from the point of having received approval in October 2014) had gone well. All funded organisations had been able to 'hit the ground running' and provide at least some services more or less immediately as they could utilise existing staffing resources to deliver (and expand as appropriate) their face to face front line advisory services. It was also the case of course that organisations had been able

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<sup>34</sup> FLASG funding was estimated to account for around a quarter of the organisation's spend on front line advisory provision.

<sup>35</sup> Other stakeholders were generally unsighted on this issue.

to backdate the funding to April 2014, claiming retrospectively (on submission of appropriate evidence) to cover services which had already been delivered.

- 5.26 However, one common obstacle was considered to have been the late confirmation of funding part-way through 2014/15, especially for those providers who had proposed to establish 'new' service provision such as telephone and web based helplines as part of their applications. Indeed, feedback from several contributors suggested that it had taken some six months for organisations to set up such new services - even longer for those who had faced unexpected technical difficulties.
- 5.27 The establishment of two new national helplines across the Citizens Advice network was considered to have been a major undertaking, not least in terms of meeting the technical requirements but also in terms of raising awareness of the service and commencing referrals. Contributors suggested that it had taken some time for their own organisation (and the sector more widely) to understand how clients should be referred to these more specialised helplines and how best to 'channel' the flow of referrals between the helpline and locally based advisors. In the same manner the set-up of Shelter Cymru's helpline service took longer than anticipated and only became operational in June 2015 whilst Age Cymru reported that the establishment of their call centre took some six months due to the need to recruit and train new staff.
- 5.28 Challenges relating to staff recruitment were identified as an issue by two funded organisations as part of the set-up phase. In the case of Age Cymru, funding originally allocated to the recruitment of an outreach advisor for Cardiff and the Vale was reallocated to the call centre team given the recruitment difficulties and Citizens Advice also had to re-advertise for the post of a Project Coordinator.
- 5.29 It was also the case that across the Citizens Advice network, each local Citizens Advice had been required to follow an internal application process whereby they had been invited to 'bid' for FLASG funding. Contributors generally felt that this approach had been logical in that that there had been no other viable alternative approach. Whilst funded organisations had been satisfied with this approach, contributors were aware that some unsuccessful Citizens Advice had nonetheless vented their dissatisfaction about the lack of funded resources available within their specific area as a result.

## Method of delivery

- 5.30 Most contributors to the evaluation stressed that it had been vital for FLASG to have funded provision which was being made available both on a face to face basis and remotely (be that by phone, web based or e-mail etc.) in order to better accommodate the needs of clients as well as to offer a pan-Wales service. Several contributors stressed the importance of being able to support vulnerable clients on a face to face basis, despite the common appreciation that this approach was much more expensive than on-line or remote solutions. It was also the case that much of the provision available via the Age Cymru network was being undertaken on an outreach basis thereby better meeting the needs of clients who were unable to travel.
- 5.31 Interestingly, it was suggested that the profile of clients being supported on a face to face basis differed from those being supported remotely. In the case of Shelter Cymru for instance it was suggested that the phone service was accommodating the needs of clients who had 'one off queries or issues' and seemed to be a cost effective method of meeting the needs of those who either could not get to a local venue (including parents with very young children and clients with emergency housing issues) as well as clients who did not feel that their issue necessarily 'justified a meeting with an advisor'. Contributors also thought that the remote model was proving to be an effective method of delivering one to many support and expanding the overall reach of services. Shelter Cymru for instance anticipated that some 4,000 clients would be supported on an annual basis via this route with a team of four members of staff compared with some 7,000 to 8,000 clients via the face to face model and with a team of approximately 26 FTE staff.
- 5.32 Generally, contributors argued that where a new service (particularly a remote call centre service) had been introduced it was still too early to comment on its efficiency as organisations recognised that they still had some way to go to reach optimal performance. Organisations mentioned that future developments included the provision of webcam or webchat services (where this was not currently available), awareness raising of the service and improved referral models across the advisory network.
- 5.33 Despite this, locally based face to face advisors argued that the introduction of a telephone helpline (where it is joined up with local delivery) was helping them work much more effectively and efficiently. In the case of Shelter Cymru (as well as in some cases across Citizens Advice) advisors stressed that the telephone service

was picking up a lot of the 'simple, straightforward cases' and dealing with these in an efficient and effective manner. As a result, it was argued that clients no longer had to wait for advisors to become free from client meetings to return their call. One such advisor argued that 'having a dedicated call centre team means we provide a much quicker service and it frees us up to deal with complex cases'. It was also the case that where clients contacted the helpline in the first instance, call centre staff referred clients as appropriate to local advisory services, and in the case of Shelter Cymru and Citizens Advice, they were able to make appointments on their behalf. This option was not currently available across the Age Cymru network as brand partners did not operate a single, integrated phone or appointment booking system.

## **Management**

- 5.34 Each of the FLASG organisations argued that they had put in place adequate management structures for overseeing the delivery of funded provision. In the case of the joint funding agreement (between Citizens Advice, Shelter Cymru and SNAP Cymru) in addition to direct project management, a joint Project Board has been established to oversee the development and delivery of these provisions. Feedback from contributors to this evaluation suggested that the Project Board was working effectively and provided a valuable contribution to the project development phase, and that the inclusion of an independent representative<sup>36</sup> was regarded as good practice.
- 5.35 In the case of the other two funded organisations (Age Cymru and Tenovus Cancer Care) the management of the funding and delivery is overseen by senior staff and was considered to be working well in both cases. In the case of Tenovus Cancer Care for instance the delivery was being overseen by the Director of the Cancer Support Team who as member of the organisation's Senior Management Team reported to the Board of Trustees. In the case of Age Cymru, the delivery was overseen by Age Cymru itself from its offices in Cardiff and provision was made available via its network of brand partners in accordance with the Brand Partner Agreement put in place during 2010<sup>37</sup>.
- 5.36 Feedback from those consulted suggested that the funding was being managed appropriately and that appropriate structures had been put in place across all five organisations to line manage and supervise the quality of advisory provision. Whilst most organisations had given due consideration to the costs associated with

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<sup>36</sup> From the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) who is also a member of the IAPF.

<sup>37</sup> Age Cymru Brand Partner Agreement - WALES (Draft 3.4 15.12.10)



delivering the service, one FLASG funded organisation was painfully aware that they had not budgeted for any administrative resource costs within their bid.

### **Promotion of provision**

- 5.37 In light of the high demand already in place for front line advisory services it was perhaps unsurprising that organisations were mindful of the need to achieve an appropriate balance between additional promotional activity for their services whilst ensuring that they could fully service the demand for their services without letting people down. One call centre manager noted: ‘if we were to advertise we wouldn’t be able to cope ... we really wouldn’t be able to manage the calls’. This approach, it was argued, meant that there would be sections of society who ‘need help but don’t even realise they do or that it is available’.
- 5.38 Funded organisations relied heavily upon their existing promotional activities to attract FLASG funded clients, largely because it was felt that they had a strong and well-recognised brand identity in place. The methods adopted included raising awareness amongst partner organisations who worked with their target groups (in order to generate referrals) as well as direct promotional activities such as the use of social media, websites, leafleting and attendance at various events.
- 5.39 A few contributors stressed however that the availability of FLASG funding had enabled their advisors to attend a greater number of client-facing events as well as to establish ‘new’ drop-in surgeries, which meant that they were now promoting their services more proactively to new audiences.
- 5.40 Several contributors stressed the importance of recruiting FLASG clients via referrals from partner organisations. SNAP Cymru contributors, for instance, noted the importance of local authority staff in referring families to their organisation whilst Tenovus Cancer Care contributors acknowledged the importance of referrals from health professionals.
- 5.41 Furthermore, many contributors also cited the importance of ‘word of mouth’ as a key promotional tool and it was suggested that many clients came to hear about the services from friends and families who had previously used services.

### **Interviewees’ experience of getting involved**

- 5.42 As shown in Table 5.1 the main methods by which interviewees had come to hear about the FLASG provider was either having been referred by another organisation, having had prior contact with the provider or having been referred or recommended to approach them by a family or friend. Several interviewees who had been

supported by Citizens Advice Cymru noted that they were previously aware of the organisation, given their visual presence within a local town for instance, although it was not uncommon to hear that they were unsure what the organisation offered. Amongst the comments made were ‘one of those names you just know’ and ‘known about them for years but not sure what they did’.

**Table 5.1: Interviewees’ methods of hearing about FLASG provider**

| Method                                    | Number of interviewees |
|---|------------------------|
| Referred by another organisation          | 11                     |
| Referred/recommended by family or friends | 10                     |
| Had prior contact with the provider       | 10                     |
| Had heard of provider previously          | 6                      |
| Had been approached directly by provider  | 2                      |

Source: Old Bell 3 interviews. Base=40.

- 5.43 Interviewees who had been supported by Tenovus Cancer Care were more likely to state that they had been referred to the organisation by a health professional or had been approached directly by an advisor whilst receiving treatment at a hospital or hospice. Age Cymru clients on the other hand were most likely to report that they had heard of the organisation or the ‘brand’ previously. In most cases this awareness was attributed to the organisation’s promotional activity and local presence.
- 5.44 In terms of the most common methods of contacting support providers Citizens Advice Cymru and Age Cymru interviewees commonly cited having either phoned or dropped in to the local office to make an appointment to see an advisor. A few Citizens Advice Cymru interviewees also cited having been informed to attend a drop-in session being held at their local office.
- 5.45 Overall, very few (four interviewees) cited having made contact with the support provider via a national helpline number and these interviewees were all Citizens Advice Cymru clients.
- 5.46 When asked about the reasons for getting in contact with the FLASG provider, interviewees cited varied and specific reasons. These included:
- Age Cymru interviewees tended to cite the need for ‘general advice’ as well as help for specific issues such accessing support for a partner with failing health and dealing with reduced benefit income;

- Tenovus Cancer Care interviewees tended to state that they were looking for advice and guidance on financial matters including benefit entitlement and support to cover the costs associated with cancer treatment;
- SNAP Cymru interviewees cited very specific and personal issues which they required support to overcome but which related to difficulties with the school which their autistic child was attending;
- Shelter Cymru interviewees cited requiring support to deal with either instances of homelessness, possible eviction and thereby homelessness, financial difficulties relating to housing (e.g. struggling to pay rent) as well as other more general issues such as inappropriate housing accommodation and local antisocial behaviour;
- Almost all Citizens Advice Cymru interviewees cited financial, income and debt related problems as being the main reason for contacting the provider (e.g. not being able to pay bills, a drop in benefits income). In addition, a smaller number of interviewees stated that they were in need of advice relating to specific welfare benefits such as PIP, ESA and JSA - in some of these cases interviewees referred to their own (or a partners') poor health as a trigger for requiring such advice;
- Nearly all of the Citizens Advice Cymru interviewees who had accessed discrimination related support stated that they were in need of advice having recently lost their job as a result of either being made redundant, suspended or dismissed. In several of these cases the interviewee noted that they had previously taken time off work due to ill-health.

### **Nature of the advice and support accessed**

5.47 Our fieldwork with supported beneficiaries shed light on the nature of issues which they had received advice and support. These are discussed in turn:

- At least six of Citizens Advice clients who had received support relating to welfare benefits noted that the provider had actively supported them in their appeal against particular benefits decisions e.g. to appeal a decision to place them on to Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) rather than Personal Independence Payment (PIP). In many of the other cases the support had involved undertaking a benefits entitlement check, helping the client apply for various benefits by completing application forms on their behalf and liaising with various organisations such as pension providers and local authorities

- Shelter Cymru clients reported that they had received advice and guidance on a range of issues such as how to respond to unfair eviction notices, how to make a complaint to a landlord and how to secure alternative housing. In some cases, the advisor had undertaken these tasks and had also liaised with appropriate organisations on their behalf
- In most of the cases where the interviewee had accessed Citizens Advice discrimination support, interviewees commonly stated that they had been advised on their legal employment rights and given advice relating to the disciplinary process, communicating with their employer, the appeals and tribunal process
- In the case of all three SNAP Cymru interviewees, the client had been supported to liaise with the school at which their child attended. The support had included receiving advice on preparing letters to the school and in two cases, attending a meeting with the parent and school
- Interviewees supported by Tenovus Cancer Care reported that they had received advice about the benefits which they were entitled to and help to apply for these benefits
- Age Cymru interviewees tended to report that they had received support across a wider range of issues - indeed it was not uncommon for one client to have received advice and support relating to a number of different aspects. For instance, interviewees reported having received advice and support relating to tax credits, heating and utility bills, council tax reductions, housing, carers allowance and other benefits which they were entitled to claim. In most cases the interviewee had received help to complete application forms and apply for various benefits or entitlements

5.48 The vast majority of interviewees who contributed to this review recalled having received advice and support on a face to face basis. Citizens Advice Cymru discrimination clients were the most likely to have received support on a remote basis, with two of the seven interviewees commenting that all advice had been provided via phone and/or e-mail. Tenovus Cancer Care interviewees were most likely to report that they had received support via a mix of face to face and phone support. Age Cymru clients most likely to state that the support had been delivered at their home (four of the five stated that the initial meeting had been held at their home) with follow on support provided as appropriate, often by phone.

- 5.49 Most interviewees (all but four) also reported that they had dealt with a designated advisor over the course of having received advice and this was considered to have been a strength of the service overall.
- 5.50 It was also the case that most interviewees had been in contact with their advisor on more than one occasion. For instance, a few of the Citizens Advice Cymru interviewees who had received support via the welfare benefits/financial capability funding agreement reported that they had received regular and in-depth support. Notably, two interviewees reported that they had attended six face to face meetings in all with their advisor and a further three interviewees had attended at least three meetings. Other Citizens Advice Cymru interviewees were more likely to report that they had met their advisor on one occasion, with follow up support then provided via a mix of phone and letter communication.
- 5.51 SNAP Cymru interviewees reported that they had received intensive support from their advisor and estimated that this support would have equated to two to three days of support in all.

#### **Beneficiaries levels of satisfaction**

- 5.52 As shown in Table 5.2 all but one of the interviewees who contributed to the review were very satisfied with the advice and support that they received. One interviewee was fairly satisfied with the support they had received adding that their view was influenced by the fact that the advisor had been unable to attend employment tribunals given their lack of capacity to do so. No interviewees expressed any dissatisfaction with the service received.

**Table 5.2: Level of satisfaction with advice and support received**

| <b>Method</b>        | <b>Number of interviewees</b> |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Very satisfied       | 39                            |
| Fairly Satisfied     | 1                             |
| Not satisfied        | 0                             |
| Not at all satisfied | 0                             |

Source: Old Bell 3 interviews. Base=40.

- 5.53 In addition, half of the interviewees explicitly stated that the service they received had exceeded their expectations. When asked about the reasons for this high level of satisfaction, interviewees cited varied and specific reasons. These included:

- The improvement or resolution of the particular issue they had initially sought advice for, especially improvements in their financial situation as a result of being able to access certain welfare benefits
- The fact the support provided was often practical and hands on in nature - 'I thought they would just tell me what to do, not do it for me'. This was seen as particularly important by interviewees who had received support from Citizens Advice Cymru and Age Cymru in accessing certain benefits, with several expressing doubt they would have been unable to complete the forms without help
- There were instances of staff from several advice providers attending meetings and making contact with their clients outside their usual working hours and days off, providing a service that went 'over and beyond' what was expected
- The approachability and empathetic nature of advisors. This was seen as particularly important by interviewees who found themselves in a depressed state as a result of the specific situation they were in.

5.54 While the majority of interviewees felt they could suggest no improvements to the service they received, two interviewees who had received support from Citizens Advice Cymru in relation to a discrimination case felt the service could have been improved had advisors had greater capacity to attend employment tribunals if needed. Four interviewees who received support from Citizens Advice Cymru in claiming welfare benefits also suggested minor improvements, again all relating to staffing and capacity, including longer opening hours for offices and greater availability of appointments. Three interviewees also suggested the FLASG providers they had dealt with could have provided home visits - one interviewee had to make a four-hour round trip via public transport to visit her nearest Age Cymru office as their nearest outreach worker had a long waiting list.

5.55 For a quarter of the interviewees, the fact the advice providers had local offices which were easy to access was an important aspect of the service it. In addition, several interviewees said the fact they could 'pop in' without making an appointment was important. For those who had received advice from Shelter Cymru and Age Cymru, the availability of home visits was considered a real strength of the service.

- 5.56 Only very few (three in total) observed that they had experienced difficulties accessing the FLASG funded advice. The main complaint related to the perceived short opening hours at their local provider office.
- 5.57 The vast majority of interviewees felt that the fact the advice was available via an independent provider had been either ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ important to them, as shown in Table 5.3. Many interviewees perceived that the relevant statutory department or organisation that dealt with their issue were biased or they had had a negative experience with them in the past. Only four interviewees felt the fact the advice was provided by an independent organisation was ‘fairly unimportant’ or ‘not at all important’.

**Table 5.3: Importance that advice was provided by independent advice provider**

| Method               | Number of interviewees |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| Very important       | 24                     |
| Fairly important     | 10                     |
| Fairly unimportant   | 1                      |
| Not at all important | 3                      |
| No response          | 2                      |

Source: Old Bell 3 interviews. Base=40.

### Reporting and Monitoring

- 5.58 FLASG funded organisations are required to report upon their achievements to the Welsh Government on a quarterly basis using an agreed reporting template. The reporting requirements expected of funded organisations were generally considered to be reasonable and fit for purpose. Some contributors suggested that the work of individual partners was not always reflected in these quarterly reports and said that they would welcome an opportunity to include more detail on this in future reports.
- 5.59 In addition to quarterly reporting, Welsh Government officials have met with each funded organisation on a quarterly basis. These progress meetings were welcomed by all concerned and from the perspective of funded organisations it was thought that Welsh Government officials showed a ‘real, genuine interest’ in their work, particularly in terms of receiving case study material which demonstrated how the funding was being put to use. The recent introduction of progress meetings with partner organisations involved in collaborative bids was also widely welcomed by all concerned.

5.60 Each of the five funded organisations operate an unique client management system. Some of these have been developed in-house (using external contractors) whereas others are industry standard systems which have been customised to meet their specific needs. The systems are summarised below.

- The Citizens Advice network adopts a well-established case management system (Petra). Advisors enter data directly onto the system and reports based on this data are compiled by the FLASG Project Manager for the purposes of quarterly reporting to the Welsh Government.
- Both SNAP Cymru and Shelter Cymru operate tailored in-house client management systems which are accessed by all advisors and used as the basis for reporting on a quarterly basis to Citizens Advice Cymru. Citizens Advice Cymru then compile these outputs with those accessed via Petra for reporting to the Welsh Government.
- Tenovus Cancer Care operates a well-established online client management system (Neo) which is utilised for all advisory case work and by the telephone support line team and allows for the extraction of automated reporting for the purposes of reporting to the Welsh Government.
- Whilst Age Cymru and its respective brand partners adopt a common client management system (Charity Log) the data cannot be accessed by Age Cymru centrally in order to prepare quarterly reports for the Welsh Government. Rather, each brand partner prepares its quarterly outputs for Age Cymru to aggregate centrally.

5.61 During the course of our fieldwork it was found that each client management system captures different client data, for instance, in the case of Citizens Advice the data being recorded for each client includes the amount of time spent with each client, the nature of the problems dealt with and the outcomes achieved such as additional income secured. In the case of Tenovus Cancer Care the client management system records information such as client demographic and health details, advisor activity, referrals, financial benefits secured as well as scanned paperwork relevant to the case.

#### **Allocating and Evidencing Outputs**

5.62 All grant funded organisations adopt different methods for allocating their outputs to the FLASG funding stream and, while there is no evidence of double-counting in



terms of different Welsh Government funding streams, in most cases the allocation of outputs to FLASG is done on a fairly arbitrary basis.

- Citizens Advice allocate their FLASG outputs in line with the case work of FLASG funded individual advisors, given that these are dedicated funded posts.
- In the case of Shelter Cymru clients are 'allocated' to various funding streams, including FLASG, once they have been entered on to their CaseTrack client management system ensuring that an adequate number of outputs are coded for each funding stream as appropriate. Shelter Cymru do not adopt any specific criteria (e.g. by advisor, nature of support or geographical area) to determine which clients are reported against each funding stream.
- In a similar manner SNAP Cymru will 'allocate' the required number of clients as outputs to FLASG on a quarterly basis using their in-house client management system. The only criteria used to determine which clients are reported as FLASG outputs, is whether they have received advice on discrimination as being the main issue.
- Across Age Cymru, the method of allocating outputs to FLASG varies from one brand partner to another (although none have specific targets allocated to them individually). In some cases, the outputs are aligned to the work of one funded advisor whereas in the others, outputs are calculated in line with how much of a proportion the FLASG funding constitutes i.e. if FLASG funding constitutes 25 per cent of the information and advice funding then that organisation will report 25 per cent of its output achievements against FLASG.
- Tenovus Cancer Care provides a report to the Welsh Government covering all of the outputs achieved by its team of front line advisors (although it is accepted that not all of these outputs are attributable to FLASG). Whilst the organisation can identify which clients have been supported by 'dedicated' FLASG funded advisors it does not report progress against these outputs separately.

5.63 All grant funded organisations were confident that they had a clear audit trail for the outputs being reported against FLASG funding and that these clients were not being double-counted against Welsh Government funding sources. Some of these clients are however being reported to other funding sources such as the SLC and local authorities e.g. local authorities who provide funding to SNAP Cymru require them

to report upon all work delivered across that particular local authority whilst Shelter Cymru report clients to both LSC and the Welsh Government.

- 5.64 Several contributors pointed out that clients will often be unaware of precisely which funder had funded the services which they had received. Indeed, contributors stressed that as clients were not necessarily interested in how the service was being funded (their priority being to access the best, most appropriate service for them) they effectively ‘hid the wiring’ in terms of the funding mechanisms being used.
- 5.65 In terms of the evidence in place to support the outcomes reported across FLASG funded provision, our fieldwork revealed that funded organisations generally required concrete evidence (at a minimum in the form of verbal assurances from clients after the event that funding had been successfully accessed or debts written off) to substantiate the claiming of outcomes such as financial gains and reduction in debts secured for clients. As a result, it was accepted that there was an element of under-reporting upon the achievements of FLASG in this respect. Methods used included obtaining both written and verbal feedback from clients as well as other organisations such as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). For instance, much of Tenovus Cancer Care’s outcomes were substantiated by written documentation (including written letters from other charities such as Macmillan when clients had accessed their grant funding) but it was also the case that verbal confirmation from clients would be accepted as evidence of an outcome achieved. Similarly, Citizens Advice Cymru would only report upon financial gain or debt reduction outcomes achieved once they had been confirmed (either in writing or verbally) by follow-up discussions with the client or other sources as such as the DWP. However, one organisation also recorded *potential* positive outcomes which should have been experienced by beneficiaries as a result of the advice given and in these cases Age Cymru used these higher figures for internal reporting.
- 5.66 Some funded organisations found the process of collecting information to verify client outcomes more challenging than others - for instance in one case it was reported that outcomes for around only half of the clients supported by FLASG were being recorded due to the difficulties associated with obtaining information from clients. The main barrier here was that many of the clients live chaotic lives. In this context, two FLASG funded organisations had immediate plans to review their methods of capturing client outcomes in light of these difficulties.
- 5.67 During the initial establishment stage contributors suggested that some funded organisations experienced difficulties defining particular outputs and getting

advisors to collect the necessary data. For instance, in the case of Age Cymru it was noted that not all advisors recorded whether clients were 'isolated' or living in a 'rural' area at the outset - indeed it was argued that this output had not been adequately defined and advisors had not been appropriately trained to record such data.

5.68 All of the funding agreements have quantifiable output targets relating to beneficiary satisfaction levels. It was widely suggested that significant effort was deployed by all organisations to meet these requirements e.g. to report upon the levels of satisfaction across a 20 per cent sample of their beneficiaries, and that securing an adequate response rate was often challenging given the circumstances and issues faced by many clients (e.g. clients with debt related issues being very unlikely to answer telephone calls). More often than not, obtaining feedback from beneficiaries involved funded organisations conducting satisfaction surveys - either in tranches, often by volunteers, or routinely as part of the process of closing a client file. Some contributors however questioned the value of undertaking such exercises given the amount of work involved and the lower than desired response rate.

5.69 In contrast, it was frequently suggested (by both funded organisations and Welsh Government officials) that qualitative feedback, particularly case study material, was proving to be a much more useful resource to illustrate how support was being delivered and making a difference to beneficiaries. At the time of our fieldwork three providers had developed and shared case studies with the Welsh Government whilst Tenovus Cancer Care had recently employed (with their own funds) a member of staff with specific responsibility for collecting, preparing and disseminating client case studies and therefore envisaged being able to enhance their qualitative case study reporting in the near future.

## 6. FLASG Achievements and Performance

### Introduction

- 6.1 This chapter considers the findings from the fieldwork and a review of key documentation. It firstly sets out FLASG's achievements over the first 18 months of delivery between April 2014 and September 2015, then considers each funded provision's performance in terms of outputs and spend.

### FLASG outputs

- 6.2 When considering the number of clients supported by FLASG funding to date, two issues need to be considered - 1) the fact that Tenovus Cancer Care, as agreed at the outset with the Welsh Government, report the total number of their clients receiving advice and information (and not only FLASG funded clients); and 2) more generally, the fact that definitions of what constitutes a 'client' vary across funded organisations thereby making it difficult to compare like with like. For instance, in the case of Age Cymru, all client enquiries across the brand partners are taken into consideration when calculating FLASG outputs whereas Tenovus Cancer Care clearly distinguishes between client 'enquiries' and client 'cases', given that the latter involves detailed casework.
- 6.3 A review of quarterly reports submitted for the delivery period between October 2014 and September 2015 shows that FLASG funding was used to **directly support a total of 37,712 clients over an 18-month period between April 2014 and September 2015** across three of the grant funding agreements (namely the two led by Citizens Advice Cymru in partnership with Shelter Cymru and SNAP Cymru as well as Age Cymru)<sup>38</sup>. Of these, 20,574 were supported over the first year between April 2014 and March 2015, whilst 17,138 clients were supported over the first half of 2015/16 (i.e. between April and September 2015). Funding was also used to contribute towards a proportion of the outputs reported by Tenovus Cancer Care over the 18-month delivery period - namely 6,283 case clients and 15,571 helpline enquiries (with 4,015 case clients and 9,192 helpline enquiries reported for April 2014 to March 2015 and a further 2,268 case clients and 6,379 helpline enquiries reported over the six-month period between April and September 2015).
- 6.4 It is noteworthy that the number of clients supported over the six-month period between April and September 2015 was proportionately higher than during the

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<sup>38</sup> It has been assumed that these outputs were achieved between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2015 on the basis that funded organisations claimed funding retrospectively from 1 April 2014.

previous year, largely as a result of the introduction of three 'new' telephone helpline provisions across Age Cymru and Citizens Advice which were not fully operational during the first year of delivery.

- 6.5 In terms of client outcomes, FLASG funding contributed to an overall **income gain of £7.81 million across two of the grant funding agreements between April 2014 and September 2015** (namely Age Cymru and Citizens Advice Cymru/Shelter Cymru) with £3.718 million secured during the first year and £3.792 million during the first half of the second year of delivery. Funding would also have been used to contribute towards a proportion of the £3.387 million income gains (£2.661 million of which was secured during the first year of delivery) reported by Tenovus Cancer Care clients but it is impossible to put an accurate figure on this given the nature of their reporting. It is also the case that the FLASG funding supported clients to **write off a total of £1.94 million of debt over an 18-month delivery period** (£634,692 of this having been achieved over the course of the first year and £1.306 million during the first half of the second year) via the Citizens Advice/ Cymru Shelter Cymru funding agreement.

#### **Performance against funding agreements**

- 6.6 The KPIs<sup>39</sup> set by funded organisations were considered to be largely appropriate and realistic, and in most cases had been based on previous experience of delivering existing services. For instance, in the case of discrimination advice delivered by Citizens Advice Cymru and SNAP Cymru the targets had taken into consideration the fact that one advisor was expected to support some 140 clients over the course of one year. In the case of welfare benefits, debt and housing advice delivered by Citizens Advice Cymru and Shelter Cymru, outputs had been calculated on the basis of each FTE advisor supporting 270 clients per year (their total annual target being 2,052 clients) and in the case of Tenovus Cancer Care each funded full-time advisor was expected to take on six new clients a week<sup>40</sup> (with approximately 200 new clients being taken on every month by the advice services team).
- 6.7 Figure 6.1 gives an overview of the KPIs set for each grant awarded and an indication of the extent to which they were achieved over the first year of delivery (April 2014 - March 2015) and the progress being made over the course of the first

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<sup>39</sup> Key Performance Indicators

<sup>40</sup> Historically, five but was increased to six due to the increase in demand for services

six months of the second year (April - September 2015) against their annual targets for 2015/16.

Figure 6.1 - Funded Organisations KPIs and Achievements

| Citizens Advice Cymru and Shelter Cymru  |  |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|
| April 2014 - March 2015 KPIs   | April 2014 - March 2015 Achievements <sup>41</sup>   | April 2015 - March 2016 KPIs  | April - September 2015 Achievements (Six Months)  |
| Delivery of Welfare Benefits, Debt and Housing Advice specialist advice services (up to and including casework) to 3,078 people  | 951 unique clients received benefits advice<br>867 unique clients received debt advice<br>689 unique clients received housing advice<br><br>The target was partially achieved: a total of 2,507 clients received support - 81 per cent of the target   | Specialist advice services to a total of 6,156 people (split across welfare, debt and housing advice services)  | 1,017 clients receiving welfare benefits advice to date, 50 per cent of the annual target of 2,052 clients<br>1,141 clients receiving debt advice to date, 56 per cent of the annual target of 2,052 clients<br>51 per cent of the annual target of 2,052 clients receiving housing advice to date<br><br>This suggests that the overall target and each of the all three sub targets are likely to be achieved         |
| 80 per cent of clients from the target groups, including people:<br>- Impacted by Welfare Reform<br>- From WIMD <sup>42</sup> areas<br>- With protected characteristics<br>- Digitally excluded<br>- With specific language needs (including the Welsh language) | Of the 1,211 clients seen by CAB between January and March 2015, 1,034 were in a target group meaning 85 per cent of clients helped by specialist advisers were in a target group. This compares with 89 per cent during the third quarter.<br><br>For Shelter Cymru 647 of their 689 clients were from target groups, representing 94 per cent of all clients helped.<br><br>(no figures available for the period March to December 2014) | Proportion of clients from the target groups, including people:<br>- Impacted by Welfare Reform<br>- From WIMD areas<br>- With protected characteristics<br>- Digitally excluded<br>- With specific language needs (including the Welsh language) | 84 per cent and 88 per cent of debt advice clients during the first and second quarters respectively were from the target groups<br><br>94 per cent and 93 per cent of housing advice clients were from the target groups during the first and second quarters respectively<br><br>96 per cent and 99 per cent of welfare benefit clients were from the target groups during the first and second quarters respectively |
| £100,000 of income gains for clients and families per FTE Welfare Benefits face-to-face Adviser, per annum (pro rata for part year).   | £680,859 of income gains have been recorded for clients and families - nearly double the target.   | £100,000 of confirmed income gains for clients and families per FTE Welfare Benefits Adviser  | The target has already been exceeded - nearly three times the target - for the current year.  |

<sup>41</sup> Achievements presented represent a six-month delivery period between October 2014 and March 2015

<sup>42</sup> Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD).

|  |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|
| £380,000 income gains in total based on 7.6 advisers   |  | £760,000 income gains in total based on 7.6 advisers   | A total of £2,091,540 confirmed, annualised financial income gains recorded for April - September 2015 (£1,033,770 recorded for April - June 2015 and £1,057,770 recorded for July-Sept 2015)   |
| £120,000 of personal debt managed and/or written off per FTE Debt specialist adviser per annum (pro rata for part year). £456,000 in total based on 7.6 advisers.                  | £634,691.69 of personal debt written off - exceeding the target by 38 percentage points.   | £120,000 of confirmed personal debt managed and/or written off per FTE Debt specialist adviser per annum. £912,000 in total based on 7.6 advisers.                                 | The target has already been exceeded for the current year.<br><br>A total of £1,306,282 confirmed, annualised, debt written off recorded for April - September 2015 (£697,783 recorded for April - June 2015 and £608,499 for July - September 2015)  |
| 70 per cent of clients sampled (20 per cent of total clients) reporting improved knowledge of rights and resilience following specialist Housing, Welfare Benefits and Debt advice | 99 per cent of CAB clients sampled during the fourth quarter (153 clients) and 85 per cent of Shelter Cymru clients said that the service has made some or a lot of difference to their knowledge of how things work, thereby exceeding the target   | 70 per cent of clients sampled (20 per cent of total clients) reporting improved knowledge of rights and resilience following specialist Housing, Welfare Benefits and Debt advice | The target is being met, although in the case of CAB, the proportion of clients sampled (at 13 per cent) is below the target set:<br><br>For CAB clients, the proportion of clients reporting improved knowledge or rights or resilience stood at 88 per cent as at September 2015.<br><br>For Shelter Cymru clients, 88 per cent of those sampled as at April 2015 and 83 per cent as at June 2015 reported improved knowledge of rights and resilience. |
| 75 per cent of clients sampled (20 per cent of total clients) who felt their situation had improved as a result of the advice.   | 99 per cent of clients sampled (152 clients) said the intervention had made some difference or a lot of difference to their confidence, exceeding the target by 24 percentage points<br><br>97 per cent of clients sampled (65 clients) said the intervention had made some difference or a lot of difference to their peace of mind and | 75 per cent of clients sampled (20 per cent of total clients) who felt their situation had improved as a result of the advice.   | The target is being met, although the proportion of clients being sampled across CAB (at 13 per cent) is below the target set:<br><br>For CAB, the proportion of clients reporting that their situation had improved was 87 per cent as at September 2015<br><br>For Shelter Cymru, 87 per cent of  |



|  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
|  | <p>wellbeing, exceeding the target by 22 per centage points.</p> <p>70 per cent of clients sampled (35 clients) said the intervention had made some difference or a lot of difference to their health and comfort, 5 per centage points below the target</p> <p>50 per cent of clients sampled (22 clients) said the intervention had made some difference or a lot of difference to their relationship with family and friends, 20 per centage points below the target</p>                          |  | <p>clients sampled as at April 2015 and 100 per cent as at June 2015 felt their situation had improved</p>   |
| <p>85 per cent of clients sampled (20 per cent of total clients) expressing satisfaction with the service.</p> | <p>99 per cent of clients sampled (165 clients) said they were either very happy or happy with the information and advice received, exceeding the target set by 14 per centage points</p> <p>100 per cent of clients sampled (141 clients) said they would use the CAB service again, exceeding the target by 15 percentage points.</p> <p>99 per cent of clients sampled (122 clients) said they would recommend using the CAB service to others, exceeding the target by 14 percentage points.</p> | <p>85 per cent of clients sampled (20 per cent of total clients) expressing satisfaction with the service.</p> | <p>The target is being met:</p> <p>For CAB, the proportion of clients sampled reporting satisfaction with the service stood at 98 per cent as at June 2015.</p> <p>For Shelter Cymru, 95 per cent of clients sampled reported that they were satisfied with the service as at April 2015 and 100 per cent as at June 2015.</p> |
| <p>Homelessness situations prevented: 55 per cent of homelessness cases.</p>                                   | <p>On average, 80 per cent of potential homeless situations opened per month have been prevented</p>   | <p>Homelessness situations prevented: 80 per cent of homelessness cases</p>                                    | <p>The proportion of homelessness situations prevented on a monthly basis has been higher than the 80 per cent target e.g. 88 per cent in April 2015, 95 per cent in May 2015 and 84 per cent in June 2015.</p>  |

| <b>Citizens Advice Cymru and SNAP Cymru</b>   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|--|
| <b>April 2014 - March 2015 KPIs</b>   | <b>April 2014 - March 2015 Achievements</b>   | <b>April 2015 - March 2016 KPIs</b>   | <b>April - September 2015 Achievements (Six Months)</b>  |
| Delivery of discrimination specialist advice services, up to and including casework total to 455 people.  | 441 clients received specialist discrimination advice - 96 per cent of the target   | Specialist advice services to 910 people over the year  | The provider is on track to achieve this annual target having achieved 62 per cent of the annual target over the initial six-month period  |
| 70 per cent of clients sampled (20 per cent of total clients) reporting improved knowledge of rights and resilience following specialist discrimination advice.   | The figures for CAB were grouped in with the statistics for the other aspect of the service above<br><br>100% of SNAP Cymru Clients reported improved knowledge of rights and resilience                    | 70 per cent of clients sampled (20 per cent of total clients) reporting improved knowledge of rights and resilience following specialist discrimination advice. | For CAB clients the target is being achieved as all but two clients sampled reported improved knowledge of rights and resilience. The sample base, at 13 per cent, is lower than the target of 20 per cent.<br><br>For SNAP Cymru 100 per cent and 96 per cent of clients during quarters one and two respectively reported improved knowledge of rights and resilience. |
| 75 per cent of clients sampled (20 per cent of total clients) who felt their situation had improved as a result of the advice<br>(Including non-financial positive outcomes e.g. clients enabled to stay in school/own home/job). | The figures for CAB were grouped in with the statistics for the other aspect of the service above<br><br>100 per cent of SNAP Cymru clients reported their situation had improved as a result of the advice | 75 per cent of clients sampled (20 per cent of total clients) who felt their situation had improved as a result of the advice                                   | For CAB clients, only 13 per cent of cases have outcomes recorded, but which shows that 75 per cent reported their situation had improved as a result of the advice<br><br>90 per cent and 95 per cent of SNAP Cymru clients reported their situation had improved over the two respective reporting quarters periods  |
| 85 per cent of clients sampled (20 per cent of total clients) expressing satisfaction with the service.   | The figures for CAB were grouped in with the statistics for the other aspect of the service above.<br><br>100 per cent of SNAP Cymru clients reported satisfaction with the service                         | 85 per cent of clients sampled (20 per cent of total clients) expressing satisfaction with the service.   | The target is being achieved:<br><br>For CAB, only 13 per cent of cases sampled to date but with all but one clients reporting satisfaction with the service<br><br>88 per cent and 95 per cent of SNAP Cymru clients reported satisfaction with the service over the two respective reporting quarter periods   |
|   |   |   |  |

|  |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|
| Universal referrals protocol developed, covering partnerships with relevant services | Target met - a single referral protocol was developed.   | Universal referrals protocol developed, covering partnerships with relevant services | The target has been met - the universal referral protocol was previously shared with delivery partners and members of IAPF  |
| 95 per cent of clients from the target protected characteristics client groups.      | 100 per cent of SNAP Cymru clients have a protected characteristic of disability.<br>86% of Citizens Advice clients were from the protected target group | Proportion of clients supported who have protected characteristics                   | Over the second quarter, 85 per cent of clients have a protected characteristic (52 per cent were not male, 36 per cent were either disabled or had a long term health condition, 42 per cent were either under 25 or over 55 and 18 per cent were from an ethnic group. This compares with 90 per cent overall during the first quarter. |
|  |  | Proportion of discrimination cases resolved through formal action                    | SNAP Cymru closed 22 cases during second quarter. CAB closed 205 enquiries, of which 19 required formal action and 80 did not (the remaining number were yet to be categorised)   |
|  |  | Discrimination Awareness Training  | A total of 13 training sessions with 264 participants delivered during the six-month period and 100 per cent of participants found the session either good or very good   |

| <b>Age Cymru<sup>43</sup></b>  |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|
| <b>April 2014 - March 2015 KPIs</b>  | <b>April 2014 - March 2015 Achievements</b>  | <b>April 2015 - March 2016 KPIs</b>  | <b>April - September 2015 Achievements (Six Months)</b>   |
| 30,000 people accessing Information and Advice service during 2014-15 (all methods of access) - 2013-14 baseline: 23,000   | 17,626 people accessed information and advice services 41 per cent below the target and 23 per cent less than the previous year. <sup>44</sup> | At least 30,000 enquiries to the information and advice service during 2015-2016   | 16,857 enquiries (56 per cent of target) received during first six months, with 14,050 attributed directly to the grant suggesting the target will be achieved, possibly exceeded over the year |
| 20 per cent of I&A service users identified as living in rural areas to whom service delivered through outreach.<br>2013-14 baseline: 12 per cent                                    | 39 per cent of I&A service users identified as living in rural areas - 19 percentage points above the target.                                  | 20 per cent of I&A service users identified as living in rural areas to whom service delivered through outreach.   | Target being achieved: 33 per cent of I&A service users identified as living in rural areas   |
| 30 per cent of I&A service users who regard themselves as having a disability to whom service delivered through outreach.  | 31.5 per cent of I&A service users regard themselves as having a disability  | 30 per cent of I&A service users who regard themselves as having a disability to whom service delivered through outreach.  | Target being achieved: 34 per cent of I&A service users regard themselves as having a disability  |
| £1.75 million in value of benefit claims/income confirmed or awarded 2013-14 baseline: £1million   | A total of £3,337,158.11 in benefit claims was awarded   | £1.75 million in value of benefit claims/income confirmed or awarded   | A total of £1,700,524.08 in benefit claims was awarded during initial six months of activity, suggesting the target will be far exceeded over the course of the year                            |
| At least 75 per cent of service users surveyed stating advice has led to at least one positive lifestyle outcome relating to income, health, independent living or social inclusion. | 96 per cent of service users surveyed declared the advice had led to at least one positive lifestyle outcome                                   | At least 75 per cent of service users surveyed stating advice has led to at least one positive lifestyle outcome relating to income, health, independent living or social inclusion. | Target being exceeded: 84 per cent of service users surveyed declared the advice had led to at least one positive lifestyle outcome   |
| At least 90 per cent of service users surveyed rating the service as excellent or good   | 97 per cent of service users surveyed rated the service as excellent or good - 7 percentage points above the target                            | At least 90 per cent of service users surveyed rating the service as excellent or good   | Target being exceeded: 98 per cent of service users surveyed rated the service as excellent or good   |
| 100 per cent of enquiries dealt with in Welsh where requested  | 100 per cent (340 in total) of all requests for services to be provided in Welsh were granted  | 100 per cent of enquiries dealt with in Welsh where requested  | Target being met: 100 per cent of all requests for services to be provided in Welsh were granted  |

<sup>43</sup> Data Source: Age Cymru Project Monitoring Form January 2015-April 2015

<sup>44</sup> An upturn in the number of enquiries received is expected following on from this point due to the completion of probation periods and induction of new staff. The following period will also include usage figured for the newly introduced Age Cymru Advice Line.

|   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
| Two additional Age Cymru Partners to embark on work to attain formal Age UK Information and Advice accreditation<br>Baseline October 2014: 33 per cent of Age Cymru partners hold accreditation | Target met:<br>Age Cymru Gwent has held the Age UK quality mark since 18th July 2014 and Advice Quality Standard mark since 5th August 2014. Both are valid for three years.<br>Age Cymru Gwynedd a Môn was awarded the Age UK quality mark on the 29th January 2015.<br>Age Cymru Sir Gâr is working towards the accreditation and is expected to complete the process in July 2015.<br>Age Cymru Afan Nedd and Age Cymru Pembrokeshire are both preparing for the audit and are awaiting a date from Age UK.<br>Age Cymru Powys is also in the process of working towards Age UK Quality Mark. | Two additional Age Cymru partners to embark on work to attain formal Age UK information and advice accreditation. | Target being met:<br>Age Cymru Gwent hold the Age UK quality mark and Advice Quality Standards (valid until 2017)<br>Age Cymru Gwynedd a Môn will undertake the assessment process in 2016<br>Age Cymru Sir Gâr has nearly completed the assessment<br>Age Cymru Afan Nedd has completed the 'quality of advice' assessment and is awaiting an on-site assessment in November 2015.<br>Age Cymru Powys is due to complete the accreditation by the end of 2015.<br>The Age Cymru Advice Line and Age Cymru Pembrokeshire are preparing to commence the process in early 2016. |
|---|--|---|---|

| <b>Tenovus<sup>45</sup></b>  |  |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|
| <b>April 2014 - March 2015 KPIs</b>  | <b>April 2014 - March 2015 Achievements</b>  | <b>April 2015 - March 2016 KPIs</b>   | <b>April - September 2015 Achievements (Six Months)</b>   |
| To handle 9,768 calls to the Support Line - 10 per cent more than 8,880 made last year | 9,192 calls handled - 94 per cent of the target and 3.5% more than handled during the previous year.         | To handle 10,745 calls to the Support Line over the year - 10 per cent more than the 9,768 target for previous year | 6,379 calls made (i.e. 59 per cent of target) over initial six-month period suggesting the target will be achieved, possibly exceeded by March 2016 |
| To support 3,432 clients - 10 per cent more than 3120 supported last year              | 4015 new clients supported - 17 per cent above the target and 29 per cent more than were supported last year | To support 3775 clients - 10 per cent more than the 3432 target for previous year                                   | 2,268 clients (i.e. 60 per cent of target) supported over initial six-month period suggesting the target will be achieved, possibly exceeded        |
| To secure £1.76 million in benefits - 10 per cent more than £1.6 million last year     | £2,661,666 secured in benefits - 40 per cent more than was secured during the previous year.                 | To secure £1.94 million in benefits - 10% more than £1.76 million target last year                                  | £725,241 benefits secured (i.e. 37 per cent of target) suggesting that the target may not be fully achieved.  |
|  |  |   |   |

<sup>45</sup> Data Source: Tenovus Project Monitoring Forms covering April 2014 to March 2015 and April to September 2015.

|  |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
| To increase the number of outreach referrals from an average of 70 per month to an average of 100 per month <sup>46</sup>                    | The average amount of referrals per month has increased to 123, exceeding the target by 23 percentage points.   | To increase the number of outreach referrals from an average of 100 per month to an average of 120 per month | Target is being exceeded. In total 907 outreach referrals made for initial six-month period, averaging 151 per month.   |
| Cancer Support Advisors to make on average of 200 benefit assessments per month between them   | A total of 2,230 benefit assessments were made by the Cancer advisors, an average of 186 per month - 93 per cent of the target  | Cancer Support Advisors to make on average of 200 benefit assessments per month between them                 | On average 194 benefit assessments being undertaken per month, just short of the required monthly target.   |
| To increase the no. of outreach clinic areas from 20 to 24, two of which will be in BAMER communities and two in Welsh speaking communities. | The number of outreach clinic areas increased to 23 - 96 per cent of the target; there was a delay in one area. One outreach clinic delivers through the medium of Welsh. | To increase the no. of outreach clinic areas from 24 to 26, all of which will be in NHS Settings             | 25 outreach clinic areas operational as at September 2015, just short of the target of 26, but plans underway to establish a further two over the remaining six-month period. |
| To increase no. of appeals from 66 to 70   | The number of appeals was very low - two appeals were recorded during the year and four mandatory reconsiderations  | n/a  | n/a   |
| At least a 75 per cent success rate with appeals   | The number of appeals was very low however the success rate was high  | 75 per cent success rate for decisions challenged (to include mandatory reconsiderations and appeals)        | Success rate stood at 60 per cent, although the base number for decisions challenged is small, at eight.  |
| To secure 10 partnership agreements over 3 years with community organisations and relevant partners  | Six distinct partnerships were formed with credit unions and various contacts within different hospitals.   | To secure 10 partnership agreements over 3 years with community organisations and relevant partners          | Target has been exceeded with 11 collaborative agreements in place with Credit Unions.  |
| To secure the Advice Quality Standard (AQS) for another two years in March 2015.   | Following an audit, the AQS was awarded for a further two years.  | To maintain the Advice Quality Standard until 2017   | Target has been achieved.   |

<sup>46</sup> Outreach referral is received when someone visits one of the CSAs in a setting other than a Tenovus office, usually a hospital setting or community location

- 6.8 In terms of the individual performance of each funded organisation we make the following observations. For the most part, organisations exceeded or came close to the targeted number of beneficiaries they were aiming to work with. Age Cymru however had a fairly significant shortfall in the number of beneficiaries they worked with over the first year of delivery, having only achieved 17,626 of the targeted 30,000 (41 per cent). However, the number of beneficiaries supported to date during the second year of delivery suggests that the target for the number of enquiries will be achieved, possibly exceeded. The monitoring forms submitted by Age Cymru to the Welsh Government attributes this change to the fact that the Age Cymru call-centre was able to operate at maximum capacity over the second year of delivery.
- 6.9 Providers also came close to, or exceeded, their targets relating to protected characteristics over the course of 18 months of delivery to date. For instance, 85 per cent of Citizens Advice's clients and 94 per cent of Shelter Cymru's fell into the target groups of people impacted by Welfare Reform, from WIMD areas, with protected characteristics, who were digitally excluded or with specific Welsh language needs in 2014/15 as did 100 per cent of SNAP Cymru's clients, all above the targets set. Similar proportions were reported by providers for clients supported during the first half of 2015/16. For instance, across the Citizens Advice and Shelter Cymru funded agreement, 88 per cent of debt advice clients were from the target groups, rising to 93 per cent for housing advice clients and 99 per cent of welfare benefit clients. Age Cymru set targets of 20 per cent of service users living in rural areas and 30 per cent having a disability: they exceeded both these targets over the 18-month period (at 39 per cent and 31.5 per cent respectively for 2014/15 for instance).
- 6.10 Satisfaction with the advice services provided (as reported by monitoring data) generally seems to have been very high and targets have been exceeded. For instance, 100 per cent of 2014/15 CAB clients sampled said they would use the service again, 99 per cent of 2014/15 CAB clients said they were either happy or very happy with the information and advice received and 99 per cent of 2014/15 CAB clients said they would recommend using the service to others, all of the results exceeding the targets set. In addition, 100 per cent of SNAP Cymru clients reported satisfaction with the service during 2014/15 (although this was slightly lower at 88 per cent during 2015/16). Similarly, 97 per cent of Age Cymru service users surveyed during 2014/15 and 98 per cent during 2015/16 rated the service as excellent or good, again exceeding targets set for both years of delivery.

6.11 During 2014/15 Tenovus Cancer Care reported that 71.9 per cent of respondents to their satisfaction survey (number of respondents unknown) rated its services as either excellent or good and a large majority, 85.5 per cent, would recommend Tenovus Cancer Care to others. Furthermore, 92 per cent of those surveyed said that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with the welfare and benefits advice they had received and 90.5 per cent rated the welfare and benefit advice staff as very helpful. Similarly, 83.3 per cent of reviewed clients also said they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the telephone support line with 95.8 per cent saying the support line staff were very helpful or helpful.

### **Views on performance**

- 6.12 Turning to explore the findings from the fieldwork on the performance of FLASG funded organisations, contributors from these organisations were relatively confident that they had been able to meet their respective targets, although it was suggested that the late start during 2014/15 accounted for some under-performance, particularly in the case of Age Cymru who faced staff recruitment issues in establishing its new helpline services. At the time of undertaking our fieldwork grant funded organisations were generally upbeat and confident that the targets set for the following year during 2015/16 would be met or even exceeded. Indeed, the outputs achieved over the initial six months of delivery during 2015/16 support this view.
- 6.13 All funded organisations argued that the demand for their services to date had been high and that meeting client number targets would not pose any difficulties, provided they had the infrastructure and staff in place. Indeed at least two organisations (notably Citizens Advice and Tenovus Cancer Care) were mindful that they had long waiting lists for specialist advice in many areas e.g. at the time of undertaking the fieldwork Tenovus Cancer Care had some 80 clients on their waiting list and these were being prioritised according to need.
- 6.14 In terms of the appropriateness of the KPIs adopted, a number of key points were highlighted. First, it was suggested that whilst increases in income had been an appropriate indicator to adopt for the current round of funding, and reflected the advice given around welfare benefits, it might also be appropriate to report upon levels of welfare income safeguarded in the future given the ongoing welfare reform agenda. Second, it was acknowledged that it was not possible to fully capture or quantify some of the less tangible client outcomes by using KPIs. Examples cited here tended to include outcomes such as improvements to client health and well-



being including reduction in stress levels, reduction in social isolation, reduction in sleepless nights, ability to live independently etc. Third, it was noted that the reporting of some outcomes as percentage data was not always useful in that it was impossible to be able to aggregate such outcomes to generate a cumulative picture, particularly when the baseline figure being used was not cited within monitoring reports.

### Financial profile and spend

- 6.15 Annual funding of £2 million has been allocated to the delivery of FLASG provision and is split between the four funding agreements as set out at Table 6.1.

**Table 6.1: Allocated<sup>47</sup> FLASG Funding (April 2014- March 2015)**

| FLASG Funded Organisation   | Annual FLASG Funding Allocated                                     | % Split |
|---|--|---------|
| Citizens Advice/Shelter Cymru<br><i>(Citizens Advice)</i><br><i>(Shelter Cymru)</i> | £1,300,000 <sup>48</sup><br><i>(£939,000)</i><br><i>(£361,000)</i> | 64%     |
| Citizens Advice/SNAP Cymru<br><i>(Citizens Advice)</i><br><i>(SNAP Cymru)</i>       | £390,000 <sup>49</sup><br><i>(£342,500)</i><br><i>(£47,500)</i>    | 19%     |
| Tenovus Cancer Care   | £105,243   | 5%      |
| Age Cymru   | £231,708   | 11%     |
| Total   | £2,026,951   | 100%    |

Source: Welsh Government Funding Agreement Documents and FLASG funded organisations data

- 6.16 FLASG funded organisations (with the exception of Tenovus Cancer Care) claim their funding allocation quarterly in advance and this approach was generally welcomed. Indeed, Welsh Government officials noted that the invoicing arrangements had been agreed with each organisation at the outset to accommodate their requirements. Despite this, one contributor was mindful that as the Welsh Government require a report on the previous quarter to be signed off before releasing payment, and this could not be prepared until well into each quarter, the payment model which had been agreed did put severe strain on their cash flow.

<sup>47</sup> Note that not all funding was spent

<sup>48</sup> Note that the Welsh Government Funding Agreement notes the annual funding to be £1,182,905

<sup>49</sup> Note that the Welsh Government Funding Agreement notes the annual funding to be £376,529

- 6.17 In terms of spend it was commonly reported that funded organisations had under-spent on their 2014/15 allocation (largely due to the late start) but that expenditure against their 2015/16 financial profile was on track.
- 6.18 A concern raised by most of the funded organisations related to the 'indicative' nature of future years funding. This was problematic for two reasons - first, some advisors had already been issued a notice of voluntary redundancy for March 2016 and whilst staff continued to work on the assumption that funding would continue there was always a risk of losing skilled employees. Secondly, the lack of certainty over continuation funding posed an issue for some organisations when deciding whether to support particular client cases which could take several months to resolve e.g. PIP cases can take up to a year to resolve.

### **Value for Money**

- 6.19 When taking into consideration the FLASG budget and achievements over the first year of delivery between April 2014 and March 2015<sup>50</sup>, it is possible to calculate that the cost of supporting each client was on average £93 each. For every £1 invested by FLASG the direct income gain/debt written off experienced by clients averaged £2.27<sup>51</sup> - over twice the investment provided.
- 6.20 When considering that the outputs reported by grant funded providers over the first half of the second year of delivery (April - September 2015) are proportionally significantly higher than those achieved during the first year then it follows that the value for money offered has improved over time. Indeed, if we were to consider the outputs over the six-month period between April and September 2015 alone (against the same level of budget for a six-month period) then the cost of supporting each client was on average £56<sup>52</sup>. For every £1 invested by FLASG during this period the direct income gain/debt written off experienced by clients averaged £5.30<sup>53</sup> - over five times the investment provided.
- 6.21 Contributors to this evaluation argued that FLASG offered good value for money, even if this was only measured by income increases and reduction in debt levels, and that value for money would further improve during the second year of delivery. It was argued that the social benefits of intervention were difficult to substantiate but a recent study commissioned by SNAP Cymru<sup>54</sup> showed that for every £1 invested in

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<sup>50</sup> Excluding Tenovus Cancer Care budget of £105,243

<sup>51</sup> Excluding Tenovus Cancer Care budget and outcomes

<sup>52</sup> Excluding Tenovus Cancer Care budget and outcomes

<sup>53</sup> Excluding Tenovus Cancer Care budget and outcomes

<sup>54</sup> *SNAP SROI Model/Wavehill* March 2014 p.7

SNAP Cymru activities the organisation realised or created an outcome value of around £20 - with financial savings being experienced across the education and welfare sector as well as personal earning gains for the family/beneficiary supported.

## **7. Difference Made**

### **Introduction**

7.1 This chapter considers the nature of the advice and support provided to supported beneficiaries as well as the benefits and difference made to them. It draws upon the views of contributors as well as the 40 beneficiaries interviewed as part of the review. The chapter then considers the difference that FLASG has made more generally to the advisory network in Wales in terms of its capacity, levels of collaboration and quality of provision.

### **Benefits of support to beneficiaries**

7.2 Our fieldwork with supported beneficiaries revealed that they had experienced a wide range of benefits as a result of FLASG support:

- Most Citizens Advice Cymru interviewees (12 of the 14 supported via the welfare and financial capability funding agreement) reported that they had secured a financial gain as a result of the advice received. Most of these interviewees had been able to secure an increase to their income - often having secured PIP payments rather than JSA benefits but also having secured Attendance Allowance, Carers Allowance and Enhanced Disability Allowance payments. The value of these financial gains ranged from £30 a week (for Enhanced Disability Allowance increase), to £60 per week (for Carer's Allowance) to some £144 per week (where a couple had been awarded both Attendance and Carer's Allowance). Two interviewees also reported that they had secured some financial gains as a result of savings made to their utility and Council Tax bills.
- Several of the Citizens Advice Cymru interviewees supported via the discrimination funding agreement reported that they had won their appeal or settled the case out of court. At least four of these had secured enhanced redundancy settlements as a result of the advice accessed.
- Shelter Cymru interviewees reported having benefited through finding more suitable housing, achieving greater housing security through eviction notices having been overturned and being more informed about their tenant housing rights.

- SNAP Cymru interviewees tended to report that their children were now able to access their education in a more supportive environment and were able to access the necessary support in order to fully participate within their school.
- All but one of the Tenovus Cancer Care interviewees reported that they had been able to access additional financial benefit payments as a result of the guidance received (the fifth had been ineligible for such support). The additional benefits secured included Attendance Allowance, Macmillan grants and Council Tax Reductions as well as Carer's Allowance for partners.
- All five Age Cymru interviewees reported an improvement to their financial circumstances. These included securing a higher income having been awarded Carer's Allowance, Attendance Allowance and Disability Allowance as well as securing a reduction in utility and Council Tax bills.

7.3 Most interviewees were also able to identify other benefits which had come about as a result of the support received. The most commonly cited benefits were:

- A reduction in levels of anxiety, worry and stress relating to the issues which interviewees had been supported with. This was particularly the case for those with financial concerns, with interviewees adding that the support had helped to 'take the edge off it' and others explaining that they could now afford to pay their utility bills without compromising on heating their homes. Several interviewees added that they had been too concerned to open bills at the time, admitting that they were brushing problems 'under the carpet'.
- A drop in depression levels and, in a small number of cases, a reduction in suicidal thoughts. This latter point was particularly made by Shelter Cymru supported interviewees - for instance two interviewees noted that they were suffering deep depression and close to suicide at the point of accessing support and that the additional stress relating to their housing circumstances was exacerbating their health conditions.
- A reduction in worry for close relatives, often partners and in the case of SNAP Cymru, parents. The benefits experienced by partners was a pressing point made by interviewees who had been supported by Tenovus Cancer Care in light of the fact that partners were already worried about health related matters.
- An improvement to levels of independence and personal confidence, particularly for those interviewees who had experienced an increase in their incomes. These changes had mostly come about as a result of interviewees being in a better

financial position to afford taxi payments or retain their car so as to maintain their mobility.

- Other benefits, but cited by fewer interviewees overall, included being able to access support from other organisations (e.g. social services) as a result of being referred by the FLASG funded provider. Furthermore, an important benefit cited by SNAP Cymru supported interviewees related to the improved integration of their children within schools e.g. that they were now better able to participate in school life, including participating in social activities and physical education.

- 7.4 Supported interviewees conveyed a mixed view as to whether they thought that the benefits experienced from these positive changes would be sustained over the short, medium or long term period. Interviewees supported via the Citizens Advice Cymru discrimination funding agreement were the most likely to argue that their cases had been 'one off' and for those whose issues had been fully resolved, interviewees did not anticipate requiring any further support. In contrast, all interviewees supported by Tenovus Cancer Care were still in contact with the provider, given that their cancer treatment was still ongoing, and anticipated maintaining an on-going contact with the provider for the foreseeable future.
- 7.5 Many of the remaining interviewees reported that whilst their current circumstances meant that they did not require further immediate help from their FLASG funded provider, they did anticipate returning for support at some point in the future. These cases were largely associated with those who expected their health to deteriorate or their circumstances to change. They included interviewees who had been supported by both Age Cymru and Citizens Advice Cymru on matters relating to welfare income as they anticipated having to undertake another benefit assessment in the future.
- 7.6 In the absence of support, the majority of interviewees who contributed to the review noted that they would not have known where else to look for support had the FLASG provider not been available. Indeed, several interviewees expressed a viewpoint that they would not 'have had a clue' where to go for similar help elsewhere. Despite this, a number of interviewees (particularly those supported with welfare benefit applications via the Citizens Advice Cymru) believed that they would have tried to apply for the benefits themselves - however they were in no doubt that this process would have been much harder and possibly less successful had they done so without support.

- 7.7 In a similar manner, many of the interviewees supported by Age Cymru thought that they would have ‘just struggled along’ and would have been unlikely to have known about the potential financial gains had they not been in contact with their Age Cymru advisor. Likewise, interviewees supported by Citizens Advice Cymru discrimination funded provision were most likely to cite potentially very negative outcomes in the absence of FLASG support. These outcomes included reduced financial settlements, a deterioration in health and in one particular case, a strong possibility of returning to psychiatric hospital care.
- 7.8 Interviewees supported by Shelter Cymru were more likely to be able to cite other organisations whom they would have turned to in the absence of support. The organisations mentioned included local authorities and other charities such as the Wallich<sup>55</sup>.

#### **Effect upon the capacity and provision of the advisory network**

- 7.9 It was suggested by a few contributors that FLASG funding had enabled some providers to put in place appropriate structures to support a greater number of beneficiaries - although the relatively recent introduction of such new provisions meant that it was still too early to be able to point to a significant impact upon the number of clients which were being supported. It was also the case that FLASG funding was considered to be critical in enabling organisations to offer a pan-Wales service which clients could now access via a number of different routes. More often than not however contributors believed that the critical difference made by FLASG was in enabling them to maintain (or at least part-retain) their advisory services thereby safeguarding the number of beneficiaries accessing such support.
- 7.10 Many contributors argued that FLASG was enabling funded organisations to provide a better quality service for clients. For instance, in one case it was argued that the funded organisation was able to provide more specialist advice than would have been the case previously. In another it was argued that FLASG was enabling the organisation to better meet the needs of clients, particularly by being able to undertake more home visits and carry out more outreach work. Tenovus Cancer Care in particular reported that FLASG funding had enabled them to establish a greater number of outreach sessions at hospital venues whilst Age Cymru reported being better equipped to conduct home visits when required. Organisations also argued that the funding was enabling them to either continue, or to provide, a better, ‘more holistic’ and ‘in-depth’ service. This was illustrated by a few contributors who

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<sup>55</sup> A charity supporting homeless people in Wales.

were eager to stress that they ‘don’t just deal with the enquiry ... when you ask another question it’s obvious that they [the client] could benefit from so many other things’.

- 7.11 In terms of the key areas of support which beneficiaries were accessing it was suggested that across the welfare related provision there had been a recent increase in cases related to Personal Independent Payments (PIPs). Across Shelter Cymru the main area of client enquiries related to rent arrears (around a third of clients were supported with this) followed by housing benefit enquiries. Across Age Cymru it was noted that most case work tended to relate to welfare benefits and finances, although in one local brand partner there had been a recent increase in housing related issues (although largely due to localised issues).
- 7.12 Whilst some of the advisory support being provided by SNAP Cymru was considered to be having a longer term impact upon beneficiaries - often by addressing the culture within a school, or by enabling a change for the child’s duration in the school - others however recognised that they were often responding to, and dealing with, emergency situations and that clients were expected to return for support on more than one occasion. Shelter Cymru for instance reported dealing with cases of repeat homelessness and Tenovus Cancer Care expected clients to return to them for support, largely due to the high incidence of recurring cancers and welfare reform issues. Similarly, Age Cymru suggested that some clients had ‘on-going’ contact with them and that the role of the advisor had increasingly become one which ‘social workers used to do ... we are a safety net for a lot of clients’.
- 7.13 Funded organisations which operated telephone based services frequently reported that one key outcome for their clients was an increase in the level of knowledge and rights amongst beneficiaries, particularly as this type of intervention was about equipping clients to resolve issues themselves. It was also strongly suggested that telephone based advice was effective in responding to emergency cases as well as supporting clients who were based in rural areas (and possibly had mobility restrictions). In the case of Age Cymru it was suggested that clients were now able to access a much better service than would have been available previously via the Age UK helpline due to the fact that it was accessible in both English and Welsh, there was no need to arrange call-backs for clients and advisors had greater ‘localised’ knowledge to share with callers, especially in relation to what local brand partners could provide.



7.14 Other contributors were anxious to stress the difference being made to beneficiaries in terms of increased income levels and debts cancelled. In this respect it was argued that FLASG was proving to be an effective funding mechanism in the way it leveraged a large amount of additional income to households and these benefits were being captured via quarterly reports to the Welsh Government.

#### **Effect upon advisory network collaboration**

7.15 Feedback from contributors to this evaluation suggests that FLASG per se has not led to any structural change across the information and advisory provision network. Despite this it was widely acknowledged that the emphasis placed within the call for applications upon 'collaborative working' had indeed been important in encouraging potential providers to give due consideration to this issue.

7.16 It was thought that the effort to collaborate had been most evident across Citizens Advice Cymru, Shelter Cymru and SNAP Cymru where the collaborative bids and the subsequent provision made available was helping to cement good pre-existing working relationships - 'to embed pre-existing close collaboration' with Shelter Cymru and 'consolidate[d] collaboration' with SNAP Cymru. One such contributor noted 'FLASG has definitely enabled us to build on the good relationships that were already in place - at both the strategic and local, advisory level'. Another suggested that the collaborative approach was helping to establish clear boundaries for what partners provided 'we've agreed that they don't do housing and we won't do debt or welfare'<sup>56</sup> although it was also suggested that this could in part have also come about as a result of LSC funding cuts in that CAB could no longer draw down funding to support clients with housing welfare issues.

7.17 During the course of our evaluation we encountered several practical examples of how FLASG funding was contributing to improved collaboration across the three organisations who were delivering joint provision:

- The Project Board which has been put in place to oversee the delivery of Citizens Advice, Shelter Cymru and SNAP Cymru provisions was regarded as having helped integrate the available services at strategic and operational levels across these organisations
- The establishment of the national helpline within Shelter Cymru and the ability to transfer client calls directly to Citizens Advice Cymru helplines and to make appointments on behalf of clients with Shelter Cymru advisors

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<sup>56</sup> Although Citizens Advice Cymru do deal with simple housing enquiries

- Formalised referrals between Citizens Advice Cymru, Shelter Cymru and SNAP Cymru by adopting the use of a common referral form
- Shelter Cymru organise surgeries across the network of Citizens Advice offices, often operating alongside their debt and welfare surgeries.

7.18 It was also suggested that FLASG had been instrumental in improving the collaboration across Age Cymru brand partners. One contributor suggested that FLASG was ‘the first thing we’ve done as a partnership’ in that the funding criteria had effectively ‘forced them to join up’. The process of developing a joint application as well as the on-going relationship between partners which had been established as a direct result of bidding for FLASG funding (via the Information and Advice Network group) was considered to have resulted in many benefits. For instance, at least two contributors suggested that local brand partners were regularly learning from one another and sharing resources (e.g. job descriptions) which meant that some of the ‘weaker’ ones were benefiting from the experience of more established, larger partners. It was also the case that partners were now adopting common monitoring systems such as client feedback forms (although it was suggested that these forms were still being administered inconsistently and at different times during the client journey e.g. post case closure, during an advisory meeting or via a follow up telephone call).

7.19 It was also the case that funded organisations argued that being in receipt of FLASG funding gave them greater flexibility and time to network with other providers and agencies e.g. attending events or drop-in sessions and meeting with other key service providers such as solicitors, GPs etc. One such contributor noted ‘FLASG has really given us some space to network ... to meet with other agencies, to tell them what we’re doing and how they can refer people to us. We didn’t have that luxury before’. One such example was Tenovus Cancer Care who had actively targeted credit unions as part of the FLASG project with the objective of promoting their services to cancer patients and this was thought to have resulted in additional referrals to the organisation.

7.20 In terms of the provision for cancer patients, contributors did not take the view that the availability of FLASG funding had led to much in the way of direct improvements to collaboration or integration of the advisory support services on offer to this client group. It was felt that this was largely due to the existence of a well-established pre-existing network of the ten cancer charities in Wales (the Wales Cancer Alliance). Rather, contributors argued that there was scope to further improve the integration

of these services in the future - particularly in terms of reducing the 'confusion' about what support was available for patients and possibly to explore 'one entry point' or to adopt 'a single referral form' for the sector. One contributor argued that as clients were making what was termed a 'distress purchase' they were not inclined to research their support options at the point of taking up the support, thereby access points needed to be clear and straightforward.

- 7.21 From the perspective of supported beneficiaries, it is worth noting that around half of interviewees recalled having been signposted by the FLASG funded provider to other services or organisations. Beneficiaries were most likely to highlight the following organisations as having been identified by their FLASG funded advisor: local authority services (namely social services, housing departments and the blue badge scheme in particular), the Welsh Government's Warm Homes Nest Scheme, the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS), local support groups and other charities such as Action for Children. A small number of interviewees also noted that they had been signposted to other services provided by the same FLASG funded provider but only one mentioned that they had been signposted to another FLASG funded provider.
- 7.22 At least three quarters (30) of the interviewees had not sought advice from any other organisations however. In most cases it was argued that their advice needs had been satisfied by the FLASG provider in question and that they had no need therefore to look elsewhere.
- 7.23 We did not encounter much evidence over the course of the fieldwork to suggest that FLASG has led to any improved integration of services between those partners involved in the delivery of the joint agreements (Citizens Advice Cymru, SNAP and Shelter Cymru) with Age Cymru and Tenovus Cancer Care - although many examples of cross-referrals were cited by advisors interviewed as part of the fieldwork. It was widely recognised that as there was such high levels of demand, there was no need to 'fight over the numbers'. As a result, funded organisations currently worked to an ethos of 'if we can help them, then we will'.
- 7.24 More generally, contributors did not think that the availability of FLASG funding had led to any greater integration of the independent advisory services sector across Wales, although it was argued that this agenda was being pursued via other avenues, including via the work of the IAPF, notably the mapping of provision currently underway. However, a few contributors did argue that some of the new provisions introduced as part of FLASG (primarily the telephone helplines) would

help integrate provision and provide a more consistent service in the future, particularly in terms of responding to emergency cases. As this development was considered still to be in its infancy, contributors generally thought that it was too early to tell how effective a mechanism it could potentially be to 'draw agencies together' and encourage referrals.

- 7.25 Across some of the themes (cancer support in particular) it was noted that greater collaboration and joint delivery could be achieved in the future - especially in terms of ensuring that health professionals referred clients for a welfare benefit assessment as a matter of routine. It was accepted that this approach would create greater demand for services offered by providers such as Macmillan and Tenovus Cancer Care. It was also suggested that there was some confusion across the health sector (and ultimately clients) as to which organisation they ought to approach for welfare related advice - with some health professionals tending to regularly refer clients to a known and trusted advisor and others referring clients according to which provider was running the 'drop-in' session at the hospital on that particular day.

#### **Effect upon the quality of provision**

- 7.26 In terms of enabling the advisory services network to commit to quality standards it was argued that the main way FLASG had enabled this to happen was to channel funding only to those organisations that could demonstrate they already had recognised quality standards in place, or were working towards them. At the time of conducting our fieldwork all funded organisations had a quality standard in place or, as in the case of a few local Age Cymru brand partners, were working towards this accreditation.
- 7.27 It was acknowledged that the lack of a recognised Welsh quality standard presented a challenge for both funders and providers at present in terms of adopting a common quality framework. However, contributors argued that current developments, driven by the Welsh Government and the IAPF, to develop such a framework offered significant potential to improve the quality of front line advisory provision across Wales - possibly more so than could be achieved via FLASG funding.
- 7.28 One other key contribution made by FLASG to improve the quality of provision was considered to be the funding of discrimination training to front line advisors and professionals, despite its funding being a relatively small proportion of the overall

budget. Whilst there was some perception that the focus was largely upon Citizens Advice advisors<sup>57</sup> it was thought that the training was helping to raise awareness amongst advisors of what constituted discrimination which would in turn enable them to identify and address such cases in the future. It was suggested that the training was proving useful and helpful to advisors and enhanced the training provision already available via other sources (e.g. EHRC's discrimination courses which had been attended by front line advisors). One contributor suggested, however, that it might be more appropriate for an 'external' trainer to deliver the discrimination training to Citizens Advice Cymru advisors as this would also serve to help the organisation to challenge its own practices and policies.

### **Impact**

- 7.29 Contributors generally thought that FLASG was making a positive contribution to the overarching objective of reducing poverty, inequality and social and financial exclusion across Wales. It was noted that the provision of independent advice funded via FLASG was a critical part of the jigsaw to enable those in poverty to maximise their income, reduce levels of indebtedness and make other improvements to their lives.
- 7.30 FLASG was also considered to be making a positive impact to the resources and capacity available across the information and advice sector in Wales. In particular contributors noted that the funding was important in enabling the sector to maintain a team of specialist and expert advisors in place and ensure that support could be accessed on a pan-Wales basis regardless of rurality or difficulties associated with travelling to meet an advisor. Contributors thought that FLASG has been less effective in achieving any significant structural change to the way the independent advisory network operated across Wales and that these changes were more likely to come about as a result of other sector developments which were underway at the time of our fieldwork.

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<sup>57</sup> Although we understand the training provision is promoted to, and can be attended by, non Citizens Advice Cymru advisors.

## 8. Views on the future

### Introduction

8.1 This chapter presents the views of contributors on the key lessons observed across FLASG that ought to be considered in the design of any future advice services as well as the future advice requirements across the independent advice service in Wales.

8.2 Some of the key practical lessons associated with FLASG and cited by contributors to the evaluation included:

- the need for the Welsh Government to commit multi-annual funding with an up-front commitment on the levels of funding available over this time period
- the need for a longer lead in time to respond to calls for funding
- the implementation of the Welsh Government's advance payment policy to be unaffected by reporting issues (which has meant that some organisations have been paid mid-way through the quarterly reporting period)
- greater promotion, dissemination and advocacy of the achievements of FLASG.

8.3 Some of the common views conveyed in relation to the most appropriate funding model for the future included:

- the need for front line advisory funding decision-making to be better informed by a comprehensive 'mapping analysis' and be driven by 'needs and gaps' rather than 'demand'
- funding guidelines ought to be 'more prescriptive ... be clearer about what it will fund, not just identify broad social welfare themes'
- the possibility of streamlining particular sources of funding - with the Welsh Government homelessness grant and FLASG (for housing advice) cited as a prime example although it was recognised that this might not be straightforward to achieve for non-Welsh Government sources of funding e.g. the housing sector funds some housing advice, local authorities likewise fund discrimination in education support etc. One contributor noted: 'it's about all of us getting all our funding lined up ... not just Welsh Government funding'
- exploring how good quality, localised providers could be encouraged to bid for funding e.g. commissioning provision in 'lots'.

- 8.4 Contributors expressed mixed views about whether it was important to maintain ‘multi-access points’ for clients. Most contributors argued that establishing a single entry point or gateway to the advisory network was inappropriate given that ‘you need different access points for different clients’. These contributors were mindful of the need for clients to be able to access a specialist advisor immediately, as opposed to be ‘handled’ by a general advisor in the first instance and then immediately referred on. A minority however were open to exploring the possibility of introducing a ‘common brand’ for the advice and information services available across Wales which could be accessed via a single entry point in order to raise awareness and reduce confusion.
- 8.5 In the same manner, contributors had divergent views as to whether future funding ought to be focused upon a small number of providers, particularly as this model (which was considered to have been instigated via FLASG) could lead to the loss of localised provision.
- 8.6 Advisory services were considered to be severely under-funded and resourced at present, making it very difficult for any contributor to identify any specific themes, target groups or geographical areas which could be ‘squeezed’ any further. Indeed, contributors generally argued that there were currently no obvious areas where there was duplication of provision<sup>58</sup> and this view was reinforced by beneficiary interviewees who generally could not identify any other alternative provision which they could have accessed in the absence of FLASG funded support. In practice, contributors were more likely to cite areas of gaps in provision, particularly in relation to protected groups or specific areas such as Cardiff, which could be better supported in the future. It was also the case that many providers took the view that demand for their advice and information would increase further in the near future, largely due to demographic changes (e.g. ageing society), health related changes (e.g. increases in cancer incidents) and welfare reform (e.g. introduction of Universal Credit).

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<sup>58</sup> we accept that this view needs to be validated by beneficiary feedback

## 9. Conclusions and Recommendations

### Conclusions

- 9.1 We conclude from our literature and policy review that there was a clear rationale for the Welsh Government to make available funding to support the delivery of front-line advisory services in Wales. The introduction of FLASG was in keeping with the Welsh Government's policy commitment at the time to support front line advisory services in order to help alleviate the impacts of various funding cutbacks, notably via the UK Government's welfare reform and funding cuts in legal aid services. We also conclude that FLASG represented an effort to address the broad agenda set out within the Review of Advice Services in Wales to increase collaboration, partnership and networking between advice providers and to adopt a more common approach to quality standards within the sector.
- 9.2 We further conclude that FLASG was appropriately designed with the objective of encouraging a much more strategic and co-ordinated approach to the delivery of advice services in Wales. We take the view that the provisions funded have been in keeping with this objective, particularly the efforts to establish new pan-Wales national helpline services. In adopting this approach, however, there has been a danger that some specialist and localised provision has been lost, and it may be worth considering this issue in any future funding rounds.
- 9.3 We appreciate that FLASG is one of several sources of funding that supports the advisory sector in Wales and in all the scheme has funded the work of over 40 FTE posts. However, despite the level of funding being lower than that which the sector would have been able to secure in the past, in our view it represents a very efficient model of funding. The flexible manner in which FLASG funding has been made available to the sector is a real strength of the approach taken by the Welsh Government. It is proving to be a critical source of funding for providers, particularly in terms of helping the sector maintain its specialist advisory capacity in Wales and also being used to part-fund a much larger advisory service.
- 9.4 There is significant evidence that the demand for advice provision which FLASG helps to meet has without a doubt outstripped the supply available. As a result, we take the view that the services being funded via FLASG have not duplicated any other services available across Wales, largely due to the significant demand which the sector is struggling to meet.



- 9.5 The time taken to establish aspects of new services during the first year in 2014/15, particularly national telephone support services, - which was in part the result of the relatively late decision by the Welsh Government to award funding part-way through the year - meant that FLASG did not operate as efficiently as possible during this first year. However, by 2015/16 all funded providers were operating to full capacity and the outputs being reported for the first six months of 2015/16 are, proportionately, significantly higher than those achieved during the first year.
- 9.6 In our view, the FLASG scheme has been managed well and appropriate structures have been put in place by grant funded organisations to oversee and deliver the funded services. In addition, we found robust evidence to suggest that appropriate client management systems were being deployed across funded organisations to evidence the client outputs - and crucially outcomes - being reported to the Welsh Government, albeit that the lack of uniformity in terms of reporting the number of clients advised is somewhat problematic. We found no evidence that the systems in place over-estimated crucial outcomes such as income gains: on the contrary, in some cases, it was clear that the figures reported to Welsh Government are likely to understate the actual gains.
- 9.7 Turning to consider the performance of FLASG our review has shown that nearly 38,000 clients were supported over an 18-month period of delivery between April 2014 and September 2015 and that the scheme also contributed towards handling a further 6,000 clients and 15,000 enquiries. In total £7.81 million of income gains was secured for clients over his period and a further £1.94 million of debt written off. With annual levels of funding being in the region of £2 million we conclude that FLASG has offered a very good return on investment to date. Indeed, the return on investment (using the second year's outputs to date as the most realistic data of ongoing performance) can be expected to be in the ratio of every £1 invested to £5.30 return.
- 9.8 The performance of funded organisations, as measured by the outputs achieved, has been much better over the course of the second year of delivery. Despite this, most of the targets set during the first year were achieved and current performance suggests that outputs relating to client benefits (e.g. gains in income and debt written off in particular) will be far exceeded during the second year of delivery. This suggests that KPIs relating to client outcomes may need to be revised upwards during the third year of delivery in order to challenge funded organisations to take advantage of the fact that operations have now reached full capacity.

- 9.9 It is worth highlighting the fact that each grant funded organisation allocate client outputs to FLASG in different ways (e.g. in some cases outputs were linked to dedicated staff, others allocated outputs in line with funding proportions and one was found to report all outputs achieved). As a result, any reporting of overall client numbers supported by FLASG must either distinguish between those directly supported or be caveated with a statement such as 'FLASG having contributed towards'. Another aligned issue raised during the course of the evaluation which needs to be addressed in the future is a need to distinguish between client enquiries and client cases - across some organisations these outputs are combined whereas others report them separately. We would recommend that the KPIs set for funded organisations clearly define and distinguish between 'client enquires' and 'client cases', to enable more robust reporting of FLASG achievements.
- 9.10 We consider the fact that funded organisations have secured, and only used, concrete evidence to support any reporting of outcomes achieved by clients as a major strength of FLASG. We appreciate that whilst this may have resulted in the under-reporting of outcomes achieved to some extent it has ensured that the Welsh Government can be confident that the outcomes captured are robust and reliable. Having said this, however, we think that there may be scope for funded organisations to report upon those non evidenced outcomes achieved to the Welsh Government as an additional KPI in the future.
- 9.11 Turning to discuss the quality of provision, the feedback received from interviewed beneficiaries points to the services having been of very good quality and highlights the fact that in many cases beneficiaries have received intensive, hands-on support rather than merely advice and information provision. Indeed, the only areas for improvement identified by interviewees related to the capacity of advisors. We further conclude that the feedback from interviewees supports the outcomes data presented by funded organisations in that they provided similar evidence that the support received had led to practical benefits and gains - ranging from financial gains to widespread health gains.
- 9.12 In light of the positive client feedback, and given the difficulties experienced by some providers to meet the sample thresholds set by the Welsh Government for reporting client satisfaction rates (not least because these efforts take away from resources which are available for front line delivery), we would suggest reviewing the funding requirements for this satisfaction related KPIs. For those providers who support very large number of clients we would suggest either reducing the sample

size, to say 10 or 15 per cent, or undertaking satisfaction reviews on a periodic, rather than ongoing basis. In addition, (or as an alternative) we would also suggest that greater focus be given to the collection and dissemination of qualitative experiences via case studies or testimonial evidence, as is already taking place across many funded agreements.

9.13 Finally, while FLASG is in many ways a real success story, our evidence suggests that, FLASG has only had a marginal impact in terms of improving levels of integration and collaboration across the support network, despite this being a goal of the scheme. In our view, the introduction of FLASG has not led to any structural changes in the way information and advisory services are provided across the network although it has led to instances of better collaboration between providers and funded new provisions which are available on a pan-Wales basis. We do think that FLASG has contributed positively towards improving the quality of advisory provision, not least because it required as a condition of grant funded organisations to adopt quality standards, particularly in the light of feedback from users of the services which point to very high satisfaction levels generally.

### **Recommendations**

9.14 In terms of recommendations, we make the following recommendations for the existing FLASG funding period:

- That KPIs relating to client outcomes (income gains and debts written off) be revised upwards for the remaining delivery period.
- That consideration be given to the adoption of a new KPI which captures and reports upon client income levels sustained.
- That a common definition be adopted across the FLASG scheme for 'client cases' and 'client enquiries' and that funded organisations distinguish between these in their reporting to the Welsh Government.
- That funded organisations only report upon those clients who have been directly supported via the FLASG scheme (and not all clients supported regardless of the funding source) to enable the Welsh Government to capture those outputs which can be directly attributed to the FLASG funding.
- That funded organisations also report upon those outcomes where advisors believe their advice should have led to income gains and debts written off but

where this has not been confirmed as already having happened by the beneficiary as a separate KPI to the Welsh Government.

- That those funded organisations who support very large number of clients reduce the sample sizes which are used to report outputs such as satisfaction levels and that greater emphasis be placed on qualitative rather than quantitative reporting of client experiences.
- That the Welsh Government, in partnership with funded organisations, explore how the collective outcomes and achievements of FLASG funded provision can be better promoted and disseminated.

9.15 We make the following recommendations for the longer-term:

- That funding for front line advisory services in Wales be safeguarded for the foreseeable future given the significant need and demand placed upon existing services.
- That any future funding scheme takes into consideration the current mapping exercise being overseen by the IAPF and the Information and Advice Strategy for Wales currently being developed.
- That any future funding application process be extended in length to enable potential providers to explore and develop meaningful collaborative proposals, particularly with localised or specialist providers.
- That funding be awarded ideally prior to the start of the financial year (rather than at the mid-way stage) to allow for funded providers to maximise upon what can be achieved during the first year of delivery.
- That it be a condition of funding that any provisions funded are totally integrated i.e. that localised and national/remote provisions are integrated so that clients can be referred directly from one to another (this has not been the case across all existing FLASG funded provision).
- That the Welsh Government explores the possibility of streamlining future funding streams, particularly FLASG and other grant schemes.

## Annex A: Contributors to the evaluation

Over the course of the evaluation, interviews were conducted with the following contributors:

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| Welsh Government                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chris Gittins</li> <li>• Charlotte Anscombe</li> <li>• Stephanie Barry</li> </ul>  |
| Age Cymru                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gavin Thomas, Project Manager</li> <li>• Claire Morgan, Director of Services</li> <li>• Dewi Griffiths, Head of Finance</li> <li>• Simon Robbins, FLASG funded advisor (Advice Line)</li> <li>• Age Cymru Gwent - Eileen Powell (Chief Officer and Paula Barry (FLASG funded advisor)</li> <li>• Pembrokeshire Age Cymru - Jane Slade (Chief Officer) and Kay Cooper (FLASG funded advisor)</li> </ul> |
| Citizens Advice Cymru                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fran Targett, Director Citizens Advice Cymru</li> <li>• Amanda Medler, Project Manager</li> <li>• Citizens Advice Powys - Muriel Ryan (Chief Executive Officer) and two FLASG funded advisors (Carol Phillips and Jenny Maskell)</li> <li>• Citizens Advice RCT (Ash Comley - Chief Executive Officer and Caitlin Tempest - FLASG adviser)</li> </ul>  |
| SNAP Cymru                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caroline Rawson, Assistant Director</li> <li>• Lindsay Brewis, Volunteer</li> <li>• Cara Bellamy and Nicola White, FLASG funded advisors (by phone)</li> </ul>   |
| Shelter Cymru                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JJ Costello, Head of Strategy and Development</li> <li>• Andrew Jones, South Wales Operations Manager</li> <li>• Christine Skelton (Telephone Helpline Service Manager, Swansea)</li> <li>• Six FLASG funded advisors (Three case workers and three telephone advisors)</li> </ul>   |
| Tenovus Cancer Care                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rachel Iredale, Director of Cancer Support</li> <li>• Three Cancer Support Advisors</li> </ul>   |
| Money Advice Service                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lee Phillips</li> </ul>  |
| Macmillan Cancer Support                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helen Powell</li> <li>• Lowri Griffiths</li> </ul>   |
| The Equality and Human Rights Commission | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kerry Wakefield</li> </ul>   |
| RNIB                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jo Lawson</li> </ul>   |

## **Annex B: An overview of FLASG funded organisations**

### **Age Cymru**

Age Cymru is a charitable company limited by guarantee and has been operational since 2009 following the merger of Age Concern Cymru and Help the Aged (Wales operations). It has its head office in Cardiff and operates through seven 'brand partners' which are regionally based throughout Wales. Age Cymru took over the governance and management of Age Cymru Powys in 2014. The organisation is overseen by board of trustees and operates three subsidiary companies - Age Cymru Enterprises Ltd, Age Cymru Trading Ltd and Age Cymru Retail Ltd. It seeks to support a number of outcomes for older people including a society where age is celebrated, people are financially secure, enjoy better health for longer and are able to remain independent when vulnerable or frail. 53 per cent of Age Cymru's income is derived from grant funding, with the remainder of its income split between a number of sources including Age UK funding, retail income, legacy income and enterprise income. In terms of the way its resources are expended, 74 per cent is used on its charitable activities whilst 25 per cent accounts for the cost of generating funds and the remaining one per cent is utilised for governance.

### **Citizens Advice Cymru**

Citizens Advice Cymru, part of the Citizens Advice national body (UK wide), has a network of 20 'Local Citizens Advice' Branches in Wales which deliver in 375 community locations. It is governed by the Citizens Advice Cymru Committee, a sub-committee of the Citizens Advice Trustee Board, and uses its delegated powers to set specific policies for the service in Wales. Its key principle as an organisation is to 'provide free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities'. The organisation has two clear aims namely to provide the advice people need for the problems they face and to improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives.

The organisation is largely serviced by volunteers - of the 1,400 staff working within the service in Wales, 800 are volunteers. On a national level, Citizens Advice Cymru holds contracts and grants for a number of Wales-wide initiatives and sub-contracts/sub-agreements to local branches for delivery, including FLASG. These contracts and grants include Adviceline Cymru;; Better Advice, Better Lives; Money Advice Cymru; and Communities First Shared Outcomes. Many of the local branches also launch their own projects to meet local needs e.g. flood advice for victims in Rhyl and an advice hub in Cardiff. Citizens Advice also work to 'influence, change and improve the lives of people in

Wales' through on-going policy campaigns. In 2014, the organisation received over £11million in funding from a mix of sources including Local Authority, Welsh Government, Money Advice Service, Legal Aid and the Big Lottery fund.

### **SNAP Cymru**

SNAP Cymru is a Wales-wide charity founded in 1986 with an aim of advancing the education of people in Wales and support their inclusion. The organisation's objective is to ensure families have access to information, advice and guidance in relation to the Special Educational Needs of their children and young people so that they can make appropriate, informed decisions. SNAP Cymru aims to make sure that the views and wishes of children and young people are listened to and taken into consideration and that, along with parent's views, can inform and influence the development of local SEN policy and practice. The advice and support provided covers assessments, SEN statements, bullying, school attendance, exclusion, health and social care and discrimination. It also provides advocacy, disagreement resolution and training for young people, parents and professionals. Partnership working is also key to the organisation's work and SNAP Cymru works with schools, colleges, Local Authorities and other agencies to help them develop positive relationships with parents. To achieve this the organisation provides information sessions and information points for schools and colleges.

### **Shelter Cymru**

Shelter Cymru is a charity focussed on issues relating to homes and homelessness. It provides independent specialist advice, advocacy and legal representation for anyone with housing problems. It is an independent charity focussing on the needs of people in Wales but works closely with sister organisations Shelter England and Shelter Scotland. Shelter Cymru also works on campaigns to tackle the root causes of homelessness and housing issues; works with young people and professionals to provide teaching and learning resources; aim to influence the legislative agenda on housing and homelessness through research and policy work; and deliver training. Tts vision for the next six years includes outcomes related to building a core foundation service and increasing front line services; leading a mass movement to campaign for decent homes; achieving far greater financial independence and establishing a more enterprising culture across the charity.

## Tenovus Cancer Care

Tenovus Cancer Care is a charitable company limited by guarantee established in 1943. It provides free services to people diagnosed with cancer in Wales and their families. The combination of services provided are designed to complement the care a patient receives through the NHS and include a support line, cancer support advisors based in hospitals, specialist counsellors, choirs, mobile support units and the 'ManVan' a project in partnership with Prostate Cancer UK and Movember. The board is comprised of seventeen trustees and has an overarching vision of fewer people getting cancer and seeing everyone with cancer having equal access to treatment and support. Its mission is 'to deliver innovative research-led, cancer prevention, treatment and support in the community to people with the greatest need, initially in Wales.'

The organisation has a set of four strategic aims for the next five years, they are:

- To provide support and enable treatment to cancer patients and their families closer to home in unique ways
- To represent the needs of cancer patients and their families
- To conduct and fund research to improve cancer outcomes and experience
- To work with communities to develop and implement realistic cancer prevention and healthy lifestyle programmes

The majority of Tenovus' income comes from its retail ventures (59 per cent) with the remainder of the funding deriving from a mix of legacies, community donations and events, trusts and grants, investment income and corporate sources. In terms of annual spend, the vast majority of income (69 per cent) is spent on cancer support services with the remainder being split between research and health and wellbeing.