



**SURVEY OF THIRD SECTOR ADVICE PROVISION IN
MERSEYSIDE**

30 JUNE 2015

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The pro bono clinics run by the Schools of Law at Liverpool John Moores University and the University of Liverpool are both members of the Liverpool Law Society's Access to Justice Committee. We were invited by the committee in April 2015 to conduct an exercise mapping the provision of third sector advice in Merseyside, with a view to identifying where there may be gaps in provision.

This report details the findings of our survey, which was conducted by means of internet research, electronic surveys and telephone inquiries during May and June 2015. Participation in the survey was entirely voluntary and all questions were optional. Our survey questions focused on three key issues, which together with a brief summary of the answers to our questions, are set out below:

What third sector advice provision is out there?

- We identified 51 target agencies located in Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens, Knowsley, Halton and Wirral who we considered were likely to offer legal advice. A full list appears at Appendix A.
- 22 target agencies responded to our survey. A list of the respondents appears in Appendix B. Several agencies declined to participate, whilst the remainder did not respond or could not be contacted.
- The most widely provided type of legal advice is Welfare Benefits advice, with 86% of respondents across Merseyside offering such advice. Housing and Money Advice are each provided by 82% of respondents, 50% give legal advice relating to employment and 45% of respondents give some level of advice concerning immigration.
- Agencies were asked to explain the delivery method and type of advice given for each area of law. 'Email', 'Telephone', and 'Face-to-face' were the delivery options, 'General advice', 'Specialist Casework', and 'Representation' were the type options. Detailed analyses are set out in Appendix C.
- Face to face advice provision is more difficult to find in Sefton and St Helens than the other areas surveyed. This is a concern for the most deprived and/or vulnerable potential clients who may not have access to either a telephone and/or the internet.
- Responses to our question about referrals between third sector agencies indicate a dynamic level of referrals between such agencies as well as external government bodies.

How has resourcing changed in the past 2 years?

- Numbers of staff or full time equivalents have widely decreased in the past two years whilst the number of clients seeking the services of our respondents have largely increased.

- Hours dedicated by volunteers vary widely but are fairly evenly split between increasing, decreasing and remaining static, possibly indicating that volunteer numbers are not affected by the wider issues faced by the third sector (eg. cuts to funding).

What has changed and what is missing?

- Our respondents report cuts to funding as the major challenge they now face. Coupled with this is the pressure for agencies to provide a high level of free legal advice for increasing numbers of clients, in areas where expertise may be declining.
- There is a recognition that, in this environment, those in need of advice may not be able to find it in the detail and/or depth they need and/or at an affordable level. This concern is encapsulated in one respondent's comment that *'we find a lot of people just put up and shut up as they can't find free services of the standard they require... even though their rights depend on it'*.

Conclusion

We trust that this report is useful to Liverpool Law Society, its members and the agencies who cooperated with us in preparing it. It should be recognised however that this report is a preliminary summary and analysis of data collected over a short period from a relatively small number of respondents.

We consider that mapping of this kind should be a regular exercise and that more in depth analysis and data collection should be undertaken in the future, perhaps in conjunction with the parallel research being carried out by the Liverpool Law Society mapping the provision of pro bono and/or unbundled services by local law firms and the Bar. The pro bono clinics of Liverpool John Moores University and The University of Liverpool would be more than happy to assist the Liverpool Law Society's Access to Justice Committee in future research in this area.

Rachel Stalker, MA (Oxon.), Solicitor
Senior Lecturer, Legal Advice Centre Coordinator
 School of Law, Redmonds Building Brownlow Hill, Liverpool, L3 5UG
 E: r.ohanlon@ljmu.ac.uk

James Organ, Lecturer in Law
School of Law and Social Justice
 University of Liverpool
 Eleanor Rathbone Building
 Liverpool L69 7ZA
 E: James.Organ@liverpool.ac.uk

We are grateful for the cooperation of the agencies who responded to our survey and follow up communications, and also for the diligent assistance of our student volunteers in conducting this research: Daniel Sampson (LJMU), Limara Gay (University of Liverpool) and Peter Sewell (University of Liverpool).

SECTION 1 - WHAT THIRD SECTOR PROVISION IS THERE?

QUESTIONS:

- WHAT IS THE NAME AND LOCATION OF YOUR ORGANISATION, WHAT LEVEL(S) OF ADVICE IS/ARE PROVIDED AND WHAT IS THE DELIVERY METHOD OF YOUR ADVICE?
- WHAT AGENCIES DO YOU COMMONLY REFER CLIENTS TO?
- WHICH AGENCIES COMMONLY REFER TO YOU?

A. Throughout Merseyside as a Whole

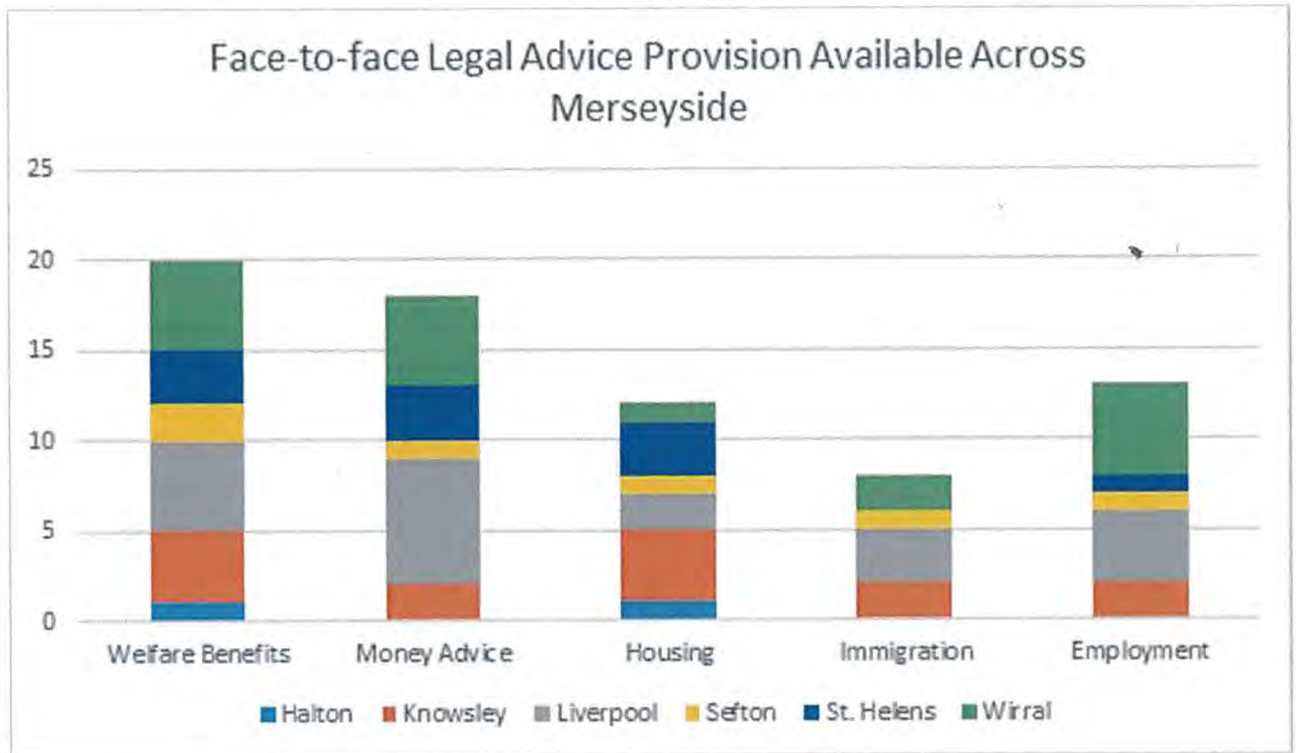
The most widely provided type of legal advice is Welfare Benefits advice - 86% of Merseyside respondents (19 of 22). Jointly, Housing and Money Advice are each provided by 82% of respondents (18 of 22). 50% (11 of 22) give legal advice relating to employment. 45% (10 of 22) of respondents give some level of advice concerning immigration.

Citizens Advice Bureaux were keen to note that they also offer consumer advice.

Organisations were asked to give the level and means of advice provision for each area. 'Email', 'Telephone', and 'Face-to-face' were the delivery options, 'General advice', 'Specialist Casework', and 'Representation' were the type options.

Two alternatives were mentioned as used in addition to the three primary means: Knowsley Disability Concern also uses webchat. In addition the majority of the national organisations have websites with a 'contact us' textbox facility, analogous to email-type advice.

The most vulnerable service users may not have access to email and/or a telephone. The graph below shows the number of service providers which offer advice face-to-face advice provision.



B. Specialised services not included in data (outside the remit of our research into particular areas of free legal advice provision)

If the service user is one of the following: disabled, a carer, elderly, a veteran, unemployed, a refugee, a victim of domestic abuse, a child, young & unemployed, an ethnic minority, they can get help with their particular issues from the following organisations:

- Refugee Action Merseyside
- Veterans Council
- Liverpool Domestic Abuse Service
- Sefton Carers centre (welfare benefits & advocacy service)
- Age Concern Liverpool & Sefton (welfare benefits and wills clinic)
- Liverpool Association of Disabled People
- Coram Childrens Legal Centre
- Connexions (employment service for young people)

Supported Employment Team

- Wirral Change (Black/Minorities general advice).

B. Referrals

Liverpool

CAB Liverpool Central: refers to 'Council, National Debtline, other CABx, Step Change, Grant Thornton, ACAS, Shelter, NHS services (e.g. GP), mental health services'. Takes referrals from 'Age UK, Council, Housing Associations, NHS services (e.g. GP), mental health services, other CABx'

Asylum Link – refers to 'CAB, ALM, NHS, Housing Options, Housing Associations, Hostels, Job Centre'. Takes referrals from 'all of the above and more'

Merseyside Welfare Rights (Liverpool Central) – refers to 'none'. Takes referrals from: 'all CABs Raise and other advice providers'.

Venus Centre takes referrals from CAB

St. Helens

Helena Partnership St. Helens: refers to CABs for debt specialist. Takes referrals from social services & police

AddAction St. Helens – refers to: mental health, housing, jobcentre. Takes referrals from: 'mental health, housing. Jobcentre'

St. Helens Council: Housing Options and Advice Team: refers to: 'RSLs, Housing Benefits, Environmental Health, CAB, Social Services'. Takes from: 'RSLs, CAB, County Court, College, Housing Benefits, Environmental Health, Social Services, Hospitals, Hostels'.

St Helens Independent Living Services, St Helens, Merseyside – refers to 'ASC&H, CAB, SHAIR, Pensions Local Services'. Takes from: 'ASC&H, CAB, SHair, Pensions Local Services'

Wirral

AiW Health: refers to 'Clinical Providers'. Takes referrals from the 'public and private sector'.

Leasowe Development Trust: refers to DWP. Referrals from Housing Agencies

CAB Wirral – refers to 'Merseyside Employment Law- Liverpool CAB housing Specialist Solicitor help (family Law)'. Takes referrals from: Local Council,(Wirral) MEL, WIRED. Leasowe Development trust, Beechwood Community trust

Wirral Welfare Rights Unit: refers to – 'Housing Solicitor (Legal Aid), Money Advice Project, Merseyside Employment Law, ACAS, CAB, Involve NW'. Takes from: 'Housing Solicitor (Legal Aided), other advice agencies such as Age UK, Wirral Advice Centre, DWP'.

Money Advice Project Wirral – doesn't refer. Takes from 'Voluntary Sector Organisations'

Sefton

Merseyside Welfare Rights: refers to 'other health and social care/charitable organisations too numerous to mention, nationally and locally'. Takes referrals from: 'Other health and social care/charitable organisations too numerous to mention, nationally and locally'

Knowsley

Knowsley Disability Concern – refers to: Pensions service (DWP), CAB, Age UK. Takes referral from: ASC&H, Carers, Walk In Centre, other voluntary organisations

Knowsley Disability Concern: refers to: Liverpool central CAB (housing) MWR MEL LCC Benefit Maximisation Team Family Solicitors. Takes referrals from 'Other Liverpool CABx Age Concern Benefit maximisation Team Health Services'.

No Halton answer

SECTION 2 - HOW ARE THESE SERVICES RESOURCED?

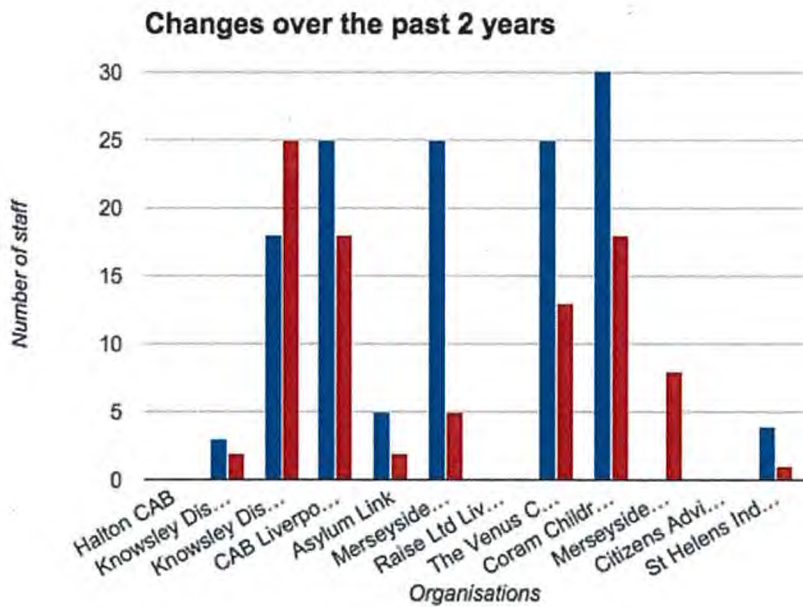
A. STAFFING

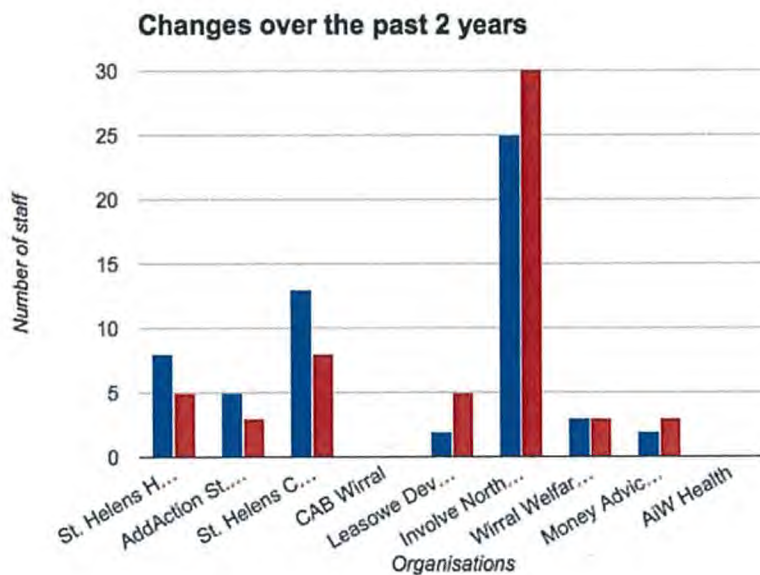
QUESTIONS ASKED:

- HOW MANY FULL TIME EQUIVALENT MEMBERS OF STAFF DO YOU EMPLOY?
- IF KNOWN, HOW MANY FULL TIME EQUIVALENT STAFF DID YOU EMPLOY TWO YEARS AGO?
- IF UNSURE OF EXACT NUMBERS, DO YOU ESTIMATE THE STAFF NUMBERS HAVE INCREASED; DECREASED; NOT CHANGED; UNKNOWN?

The graphs below demonstrate the changes in the number of respondents' staff over the past two years.

■ 2013
■ 2015





In order to analyse the changes over recent years organisations were asked how many full time members of staff they employ now, and how many full time employees were employed two years ago. Overall, it can be seen that generally more staff were employed in 2013. Furthermore, based on the totality of our results the average trend in the number of staff is a decrease of 50%.

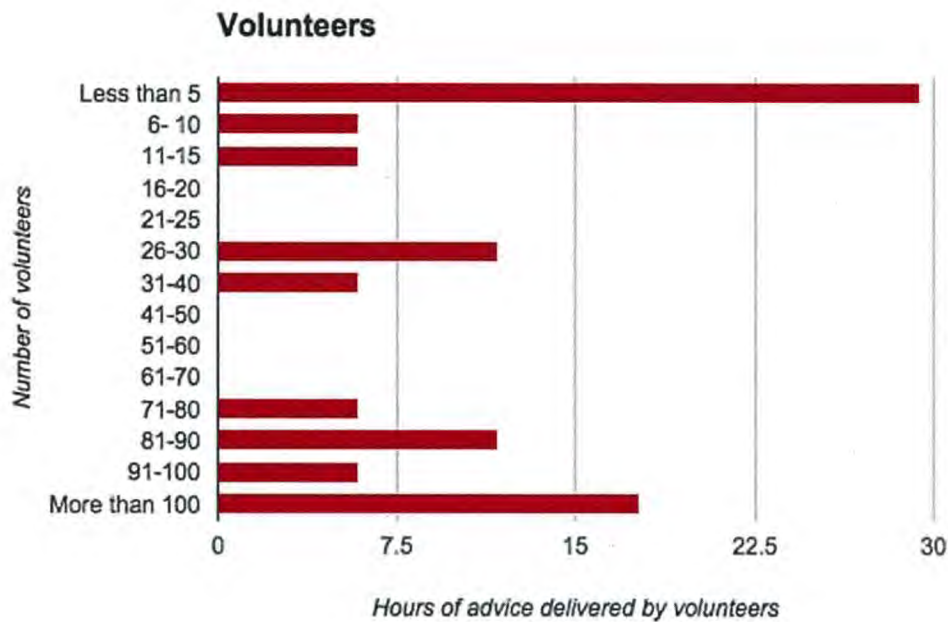
One respondent's staff numbers have remained the same over the past 2 years, whilst in two others the number of staff has increased. However, in the sector generally there has been an overall decrease. Indeed, even when respondents did not respond or may have been unsure of the exact numbers, respondents still indicated that there had been a decrease in the number of staff over the past two years.

B. VOLUNTEER HOURS

QUESTIONS ASKED:

- HOW MANY HOURS OF ADVICE ARE GIVEN BY VOLUNTEERS PER WEEK?
- HAS THIS NUMBER INCREASED OR DECREASED IN THE LAST 2 YEARS?

The question was answered by 17 respondents. Hours of advice delivered using volunteers were broken down into various categories ranging from less than 5 from to more than 100. It is clear that, overall, the number of volunteers outweigh the number of full time equivalent staff. 29% of respondents have less than 5 volunteers. At the other end of the spectrum, 17% of respondents have more than 100 volunteers.



As can be seen from the chart below, changes in volunteer numbers over the past 2 years vary widely between the respondents, with 5.3% of respondents unsure of how the position has changed. These results indicate that whilst there is not a shortage of volunteers in third sector agencies, the principal difficulty is likely to be the decrease in the number of full time staff, or equivalent.

