



Torbay Advice Network

Annual Report

November 2007 – March 2009

Supported by



Mission Statement

Torbay Advice Network is a quality assured infrastructure organisation which aims to support the advice and information sector in Torbay through signposting services, multi-agency training, lobbying, strategic and developmental work.

TAN will collect, collate, monitor and report on the advice and information sector in Torbay identifying gaps in service provision, staff, training and other resources and will support joint working initiatives.

In support of the above TAN will strive to become the natural choice for local people when they need information and/or advice. It will strive to become a centre of excellence noted for customer service, for going that extra mile.

TAN will aim to be a market leader, at the forefront of new and innovative service delivery within Torbay.

TAN will epitomise strong partnership working and ensure equitable resources across the TAN community.

TAN Priorities

TAN was set up to implement the recommendations of the Advice Strategy (2006) around Quality, Training, Access, Monitoring, Volunteer recruitment, Strategic Voice and the provision of an Advice Centre.

The main priorities today are to:

1. Deliver multi-agency training at basic, skilled advisor and legal advisor levels
2. Monitor the sector and use the information to develop the TAN community
3. Increase the Strategic Voice of the sector as a whole
4. Increase Quality Standards
5. Develop membership standards, criteria and participation
6. Attract new volunteers to TAN and the sector

Future priorities dependent on funding are to:

1. Develop single points of entry via an advice hub, telephone signposting line and web portal

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The period since the last Annual General Meeting has seen numerous changes within the organisation of the Torbay Advice Network. Fiona Collis, Strategy Co-ordinator, left in the summer of 2008 since when Emma Hadland has filled that role assisted by Sandra Marsden, who combines her role of Administrator with that of Training Co-ordinator. The Trustees of TAN would like to record their thanks to Mrs Collis for her hard work and commitment to the aims and purpose of TAN during her period with us. Mrs Collis was deeply involved with the formation of an Advice Strategy for Torbay commissioned by the Health and Social Care Partnership Committee in March 2005 which ultimately led to the formation of TAN.

TAN has faced numerous challenges since the last Annual General Meeting but continues to be recognised as a valuable service within the Advice and Information sector in Torbay, bringing together advice provided from the Statutory, Private and Voluntary sectors. In addition TAN has continued to develop and strengthen multi-agency training by providing a range of courses in topics including Fuel Poverty, Relationship Breakdown, Welfare Benefits, Employment and advice on bringing claims in the County Court. Last year TAN facilitated training to 449 people from 56 different organisations. Further courses are currently being run with the next season of courses scheduled for the autumn.

TAN has also undertaken periodic monitoring surveys involving member organisations to establish gaps in the provision of advice in Torbay, to monitor trends, to identify potential improvements or problems, to assess the impact of advice and to evaluate the contribution of volunteering.

The TAN website remains a work in progress but it is hoped that the site will be fully functional within a short period of time with general information about TAN and links to member organisations and related sites to enable anyone to obtain advice, information and advocacy services when and where they need them. TAN also retains a presence on TORCOM, a local web portal for the voluntary sector.

Since the last Annual General Meeting, TAN has either organised, or been involved in, numerous events designed to provide

information and contacts for potential volunteers in the voluntary sector and also organised an Advice Day for those members of the community faced with concerns about their finances.

Both Emma Hadland and Sandra Marsden together with numerous members of the Steering Committee and Board of Trustees attended the Credit Crunch Conference facilitated by Torbay Council at the Riviera International Conference Centre at the end of last year and TAN, in addition to other member organisations, had a presence at the subsequent advice and information events in Torquay, Paignton and Brixham.

TAN continues to work to bring advice providers in the Statutory, Private and Voluntary sectors together in order to strive for a joined up approach to the provision of Advice, Information and Advocacy services to the people of Torbay. TAN recognises the need for dynamism in meeting the needs of those that seek to access services from TAN's members and to explore Partnership working to provide greater value to Commissioners of funding whilst maximising the services provided to those that require advice, information and advocacy. TAN will also seek to build capacity within member organisations ultimately to the benefit of the people of Torbay.

Finally I would like to register my thanks again to the staff of Torbay Advice Network and extend the thanks of the Trustees to the members of the Steering Committee for their energy, expertise and commitment to the aims and objectives of Torbay Advice Network.

Chris Wills

TAN Organisation Chart

Charity Trustees & Company Directors

Chair: Chris Wills (Hooper & Wollen Solicitors)
Steve Bulman (WBW Solicitors)
Richard Blair (WBW Solicitors)
Stephen Corline (Childrens Services, Torbay Council)
Tim Godfrey (Bishop Fleming Accountants) – co-opted
Gordon Jennings (Torbay Council) – resigned
Trevor Taylor – resigned

Advisory Board

Chair: Pat Harris (Age Concern Torbay)
Trish Webster (Torbay Council)
Dawn Wilson (Housing Services)
Katie Lusty (Library Services)
Ken Pickering / John Cooper (Torbay Citizens Advice Bureau)
Steve Gale (Disability & Mental Health Information Services)
Andrea Warren (Folks@home)
Mark Gilmartin (Pensions Service)

Staff

Fiona Collis – Advice Strategy Coordinator (resigned July 2008)
Emma Hadland - Advice Strategy Coordinator (part time)
Sandra Marsden – Administrator (part time)

Training Report

Training courses run by TAN continue to be very well supported. TAN has trained 449 people from 56 organisations during this financial year on 23 training courses.

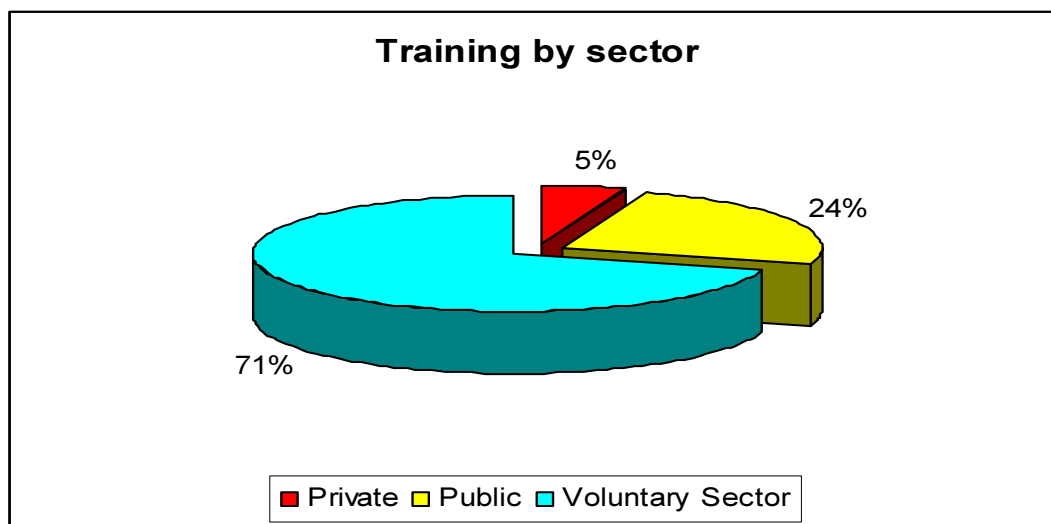
Over the last year TAN has developed a training programme based on the training needs of advice agencies within Torbay.

TAN has been able to continue to offer the Signposting (10 x ½ day sessions) and Skilled Advisor courses (10 day sessions) for free, however we have had to introduce fees for all other courses.

To reflect the current economic climate, debt and benefits training has been popular and all courses have been full booked.

Our most popular course for the year has been “Dealing with Aggressive Behaviour”.

Whilst many third sector organisations continue to have financial difficulties and no allocated training budgets, it is encouraging to know that 71% of all attendees were from this sector, the majority of whom are volunteers.



TAN will continue to assess the training needs of the sector and develop training to ensure that advisors have the most up to date information and skills to underpin our aims to improve the quality of advice available in Torbay.

Participating Organisations

A4E	Riviera Care Group
Age Concern	Riviera Housing Trust
Brixham Does Care	Signposts for Carers
Brixham YES	Shikenah Mission
CAB	South Devon Womens aid
CAF	South West Pound
Care Trust	Steadywork
Checkpoint	Street Wardens
Cool House	Supporting People
	Torbay Coast &
Connections	Countryside
Connexions	Torbay Council
Devon & Cornwall Housing	Torbay Advice Network
Devon Inclusive Housing	Torbay Councillors
Devon Partnership Trust	Torbay Voluntary Service
DIS	Vocal
Disability Community	
Group	WBW solicitors
EDP	Westcountry Housing
Eddystone Trust	Windmill Centre
E&B	
FAB Team	
folks @ home	
Housing Services	
JATIS	
JobCentrePlus	
Langley House Trust	
MHIS	
Monitoring Group	
Multiple Sclerosis Society	
Nextstep	
Old Mill Surgery	
Other	
PLUSS	
Potential Volunteer	
Probation Service	
P58	
Rethink	

Testimonials

Comments received from the Signposting Training Course

“I have already dissuaded someone from using a “loan shark” as a result of this training.”

“There was a lot I learned today. All very interesting and certainly can put this into the job role I do now.”

“Good, the people that made the presentations did it with passion and commitment. A well organised, very informative course. Would recommend it.”

“Totally amazing. So many organisations giving me so much information that I can use and pass on. I have enjoyed every minute and on some talks wanted the speaker to go on as it has been so interesting.”

“A good overview of the support network in Torbay. I hadn't realised so many organisations, and particularly charities, existed.”

How has TAN training benefited organisations

“I like the flexibility of the training as it has allowed my new volunteers to attend when they are able. Had it been under the old system of take it or leave it, I fear they may have left us.”

“The courses offered have covered a wide spread of relevant areas and the opportunity for updating knowledge is much appreciated. Attendance at a TAN course also always gives excellent networking and ability to have an update on changes of personnel in other organisations.”

“TAN training plays an important role in developing the skill and knowledge base of our volunteer advisers. Training courses are well structured, informative and tailored to meet the needs of advisers.”

“The TAN have been able to provide essential training which fits in perfectly with our own training programme. We find the courses are well run and entirely appropriate for our organisation.”

Monitoring

One of the main priorities of TAN is to monitor the sector and use the information to develop the TAN community.

The following are examples of the results obtained for a monitoring evaluation undertaken for 2007-2008.

- Voluntary sector organisations have little or no budget for external training.
- Volunteers within the network worked 57626 hours during the year saving £330,196.98 based on minimum wage.
- 13 volunteers accessed paid employment as a result of their volunteering experience.
- 8 participating agencies have a quality mark
- 33% of all advice enquiries related to benefits.
- Total debt recorded by Network advisors amounts to £18,968,497.
- Total financial gain accrued as a result of advice was £856,566.62 the majority of which was through ensuring clients were in receipt of all the benefits they were entitled to, although not all participating organisations record these details so the actual gain will be higher.
- The majority of people received advice through a drop in centre.
- Utility Services is an emerging issue that people are asking for advice on and highlights the current problems with increasing energy bills and fuel poverty.
- Throughout Torbay there is a need to increase availability of advice through home visits to ensure that vulnerable and housebound people also have access to advice.

Additional Activities

- Volunteer Recruitment Fair - in partnership with other organisations that attracted 170 potential volunteers
- Promotion of Train to Gain
- Promotion of Digital Switchover

Future Aims

- Increase membership to the Network
- Establish TAN Quality Mark
- Continue to develop the training programme
- Encourage network members to undertake partnership working
- Support network members to make joint funding applications
- Monitor gaps in provision
- Develop an advice sector consortium
- Organise “One Stop Shop” Advice days
- Develop a Website

Thanks

With Grateful thanks to:

Torbay Council, Gemini Charitable Trust, Lloyds TSB, Age Concern, and Moneysavingexpert.com for their financial support.

The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureau for allowing TAN to use their Advice Worker Training materials.

To all trustees, steering board members, and partners who have given their time and expertise to develop TAN and our training programmes.

Special thanks to Fiona Collis who left as TAN's Advice Strategy Coordinator in July 2008 and Ken Pickering who was Chair of the Steering Board for their hard work and enthusiasm to establish and develop TAN.



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