



AdvicePro enhances Disability advice service

Client	Disability Equality North West (NW)
Users since	January 2010
Package	AdvicePro Custom
Background / Problem	
<p>Disability Equality North West (NW) provide direct services to disabled people and their carers. They are a Disabled People’s Organisation – all services are run and controlled by disabled people themselves.</p> <p>One of Disability Equality NW’s key services is its Information and Advice Service. The volunteers who provide this service advise on a wide range of issues for both disabled people and their carers / advocates. Some of these issues include: welfare benefits, leisure and support group access and consumer rights. Advice is provided through a variety of channels - information and advice centers, telephone and over the internet.</p> <p>In the past, Disability Equality NW’s Information and Advice Service used a paper based system to record their client interactions. The information collected was subsequently entered into their own bespoke database. Due to the nature of this system, each client interaction occurred in isolation. When assisting a client, advisors were usually unable to determine if previous contact existed, and where it did – the form that the contact had taken. As a result the service was mostly restricted to dealing with closed, one off enquiries.</p> <p>Disability Equality NW wanted to move away from this closed enquiry approach towards a more case based method of working. They wanted to consider a client’s entire history of contact in their communications in order to provide a more integrated and comprehensive service. It was necessary to find a new system of working in order to facilitate this. They also required a system through which to manage volunteers and track their development.</p>	
Solution	
<p>In order to address these issues, Disability NW compared various case management systems. After evaluating alternatives, they decided to introduce AdvicePro Custom.</p>	

Outcomes

AdvicePro is now used by Disability Equality NW's Information and Advice service to manage all channels through which their advice is delivered. When a service user comes into contact with them, the advisor can view client contact history and background information. AdvicePro allows them to consider all contact a client has had with their organisation, regardless of the channel used or the particular advisor who delivered previous advice. This information is available to the advisors in real time due to the online nature of AdvicePro. The system can be updated by different advisors simultaneously, ensuring that whenever contact is made, it is immediately visible to other advisors. This allows for a more informed level of advice. It also saves the service user time as it negates the need for repetition in providing the background picture to their situation.

Enhanced Service Capacity

In addition to integrating the service's interactions with clients, AdvicePro has allowed Disability Equality NW to diversify with regard to the type of advice they offer. The Information and Advice Service are now able to carry out more complicated work requiring a series of interactions with clients.

Further, Disability Equality NW are now able to market their Information and Advice service in line with this enhanced capacity for advice provision regarding ongoing issues.

Volunteers

Disability NW use AdvicePro to co-ordinate their volunteers. They are in the process of setting up a Volunteer Bureau and have made use of the custom features of AdvicePro to facilitate this. They created a User Defined Field (UDF) in AdvicePro to track people entering this part of their service.

In addition to facilitating volunteer co-ordination, AdvicePro has had a positive impact upon the volunteers themselves. Using their previous paper based case management system, volunteers used to take notes when meeting clients and then passed them on to someone else who later entered them into a database. This was a two stage, disjointed process.

Using AdvicePro, advisors are now able to perform the whole process themselves from start to finish. The volunteers are able to gain a clearer sense of completeness regarding their work. This helps the advisors, who are themselves disabled, to derive a greater level of satisfaction from their work.

Further information:

www.adviceuk.org.uk

www.disability-equality.org.uk