

Cumbria Advice Network



Autumn 2013

Issue 17

“LIFE’S MOST URGENT QUESTION IS: WHAT ARE YOU DOING FOR OTHERS ?”

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

We are delighted to be working with the Child Poverty Action Group on our 5th Annual Conference. This will be held on Thursday 23rd January at Rheged, Penrith. The focus is on Welfare Reform. Turn to pages 2 and 3 to see more detail.

The Ways to Welfare Scheme was introduced by the County Council in April 2013 when Crisis Loans and Community Care grants came to an end. Find out more about the scheme, how it has been operating and how the first 6 months are being reviewed on pages 4 to 7

Homelife Carlisle Home Improvement Agency offers a wide range of services. Find out more on page 8

For details of two new Housing courses see pages 11 and 12

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Understanding Welfare Reform in Cumbria

**Cumbria Advice Network: 5th Annual Conference
Thursday 23rd January 2014 at Rheged, Penrith**

Main Session: Keynote Speaker – Councillor Patricia Bell, Public Health and Communities

Main Session: Welfare Reform Overview - Essie Rashidschi, CPAG

Workshop 1: Bedroom taxes and benefit cap - David Strickland, CPAG

The 'bedroom tax' affects thousands of people in social housing, causing widespread hardship and putting families at risk of homelessness. At the same time, the benefit cap affects a relatively small number of larger families, but with potentially devastating impacts on children. This workshop examines the rules, case law and any challenges to these provisions, as well as looking at the guidance for discretionary housing payments. It will also include a brief look ahead at how these and other rules, including non-dependant deductions, will operate under the housing element of universal credit.

Workshop 2: PIP payment: implementation and implications - Steve Johnson, CPAG

Personal independence payment (PIP) replaces working-age disability living allowance (DLA) for new claims. This workshop provides an opportunity for advisers to share their experiences of the claims and assessment process, identify common issues, and learn more about how to help claimants gain entitlement to the new benefit.

Workshop 3: Coping with Universal Credit: how the new claims and payment arrangements will affect vulnerable clients - Essie Rashidschi

Universal credit will see the introduction of radical changes in the way benefits are claimed and paid. There will be no paper claim forms, and most claims and awards will be managed online. Payments will normally be assessed and paid on a monthly basis, and most payments will be made directly to claimants in a monthly lump sum.

This workshop will consider how these changes will affect vulnerable claimants and their advisers. It will explain the rules and the policy intent behind them, as well as the DWP's 'exceptions policy' and other safeguards for vulnerable claimants. It will also provide an opportunity for participants to discuss how the changes may affect them and their clients.

Main Session: Commission into the Impact of Welfare Reform: Aims and Objectives

Andy Beeforth, Chief Executive, Cumbria Community Foundation

The Commission into the Impact of Welfare reform in Cumbria is an independent body facilitated by the Cumbria Third Sector Network and chaired by the Bishop of Carlisle. It's work arose from a presentation to the Cumbria Leadership Board on whose behalf the work is being undertaken. With support from Cumbria County Council and Cumbria Community Foundation the Commission will invite individuals and organisations to provide evidence of their experiences over 3 sessions in the spring of 2014. The objectives of the Commission include examining the impacts positive and negative of changes with the aim of generating recommendations for stakeholders. The presentation will describe in more detail the objectives of the Commission and how people and organisations can be involved.

Main Session: Local Welfare Assistance: Ways to Welfare update - Cumbria County Council

Registration will be from 9.30am with the Conference running between 10.00am and 4.00pm.

Delegates will have the opportunity to attend 2 out of the 3 workshops.

You are welcome to bring along leaflets about your organisation.

Cost of CAN Courses: All places are free to Network members however non attendance or cancellation without 48 hours notice will incur a £50:00 charge.

Allocation of places: Places are limited and will be allocated on a first come first served basis with up to a maximum of 2 places per organisation. If you have more people who want to attend, please let us know as we will operate a waiting list.

To book your place, please complete the booking form attached to this newsletter and email to Mandy Pfleger at mandypfleger@hotmail.com or post to Mandy at Citizens Advice Allerdale, Vulcans Lane, Workington, CA14 2BT



Ways to Welfare

What is Ways to welfare?

On the 31 March 2013, the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) abolished the Crisis Loan and Community Care Grant elements of the Social Fund. In their place, the DWP provided local councils with 2 years funding to develop a sustainable replacement service that would meet local need. Cumbria County Council has developed the Ways to Welfare Programme to provide support for local people facing crisis or serious financial hardship.

This programme is significantly different to what was offered by the DWP Social Fund. Rather than making an application for cash, our customers call up and explain their situation to a trained social care worker who will suggest the most appropriate course of action for that individual to take for their individual circumstances. The assistance offered is usually in the form of signposting to a community-based support organisation however financial assistance or the provision of certain basic supplies / items may also be offered. Financial assistance will only be considered where there is no local support to assist a caller.

Throughout the programme, development work will take place to highlight areas of need and gaps in support provision. This will guide any investment and commissioning of community based services fill these gaps in a sustainable way.

How can you access the support?

Anyone can contact the Community support team by calling 01228 221100, Support, advice and signposting is available to people over 16, reside in Cumbria and are facing a crisis or severe hardship.

The service is a phone service, with a local number, however, for people who have no access to a phone, then it is suggested they call from a support agency, or the job centre. For people with little or limited credit on their phone, the community support team will clarify the customers phone number and return the call to reduce cost to the customer.

Where possible the person in crisis should call the team, so the team member can capture the crisis and discuss the most appropriate options. However, if the customer would prefer to be supported by their support worker or advocate then the staff will speak with them with the customers consent.

At times the phones can be busy and therefore there is the option to leave a voice message, it is suggested the caller leaves their name and a contact number and a CST worker will call back within 2 hours.

What kind of support can I expect?

The community support team consist of 4 social care workers who provide a telephone support service Monday to Friday 09.00 to 16.30 hrs. They offer advice, support and signposting. In many cases they will give advice on the most appropriate agency to offer professional advice, such as the, children's Centres, Christians Against Poverty, Citizens Advice Bureau, Department of work & pensions, Law centre, People First, Supporting People

What has been requested during the first 6 months?

During the six months, majority of calls have been from people in need of food, assistance with energy and furniture.

Examples of support given:

Case study 1

A customer from Carlisle was referred to us because she had recently been made redundant and was living with a disabled relative, having left her partner in the family home with their two teenage boys. She found herself in a very difficult situation and was without food while waiting for her benefits to be sorted out. We supported her in accessing food and guidance from the local food bank linked to a church.

Whilst at the Church she spoke to the chief minister who realised she was quite low emotionally. She was in need of accommodation, but did not see that as a possibility without first getting employment.

He was able to put her in touch with a landlord who had a one bedroom house available to let. The church was able to help with a small deposit to enable her to move in, and arranged for some basic furniture to be provided for her from The Op Shop warehouse that they run.

The minister informed us that the customer was still in need of kitchen items and we were able to help her with a crisis kitchen pack to enable her to cook basic meals.

The chief minister remains in contact with the customer and understands she is settling in well, and still looking for work, and in a much more secure situation as she begins to rebuild her life.

Case study 2

A Customer from the Copeland area called after a change in circumstances meant a change in benefits was required. He was late completing the application process due to being diagnosed with testicular cancer at the same time and needing urgent treatment. Subsequently his benefit would be delayed by one week.

The customer's crisis was lack of food and energy. He was supported through financial assistance for energy which was deemed important due to his condition. Usually, a foodbank voucher would be issued for food however, again due to the customer's circumstances, it was felt that the additional effort of accessing a foodbank could have a negative effect on his wellbeing. In this instance he was granted financial assistance for food for him to use in the most convenient way.



Ways to Welfare

We advised the customer that, due to his situation he would be able to apply for Personal Independence Payment (PIP). The customer had been under the impression that this would affect his Job Seekers Allowance which is not the case. The customer was feeling tired at the time of the call so he was informed that he was allowed two weeks to complete the application after starting it. He was advised to register immediately after the call, which would take a couple of minutes, and then return to it when he was feeling better. This would speed up the application process.

Case study 3

A customer from Allerdale called with a request for money to pay her bills. She described issues with her brother who was a recovering alcoholic, her father who was very ill, and a recent breakup. While she described no such crisis affecting her general wellbeing, she was clearly very low emotionally, struggling with her situation and felt she had nobody to turn to.

The customer was advised to make an appointment at the GP to see what support could be accessed around her frame of mind. She was advised to contact the water energy company to explain to them she is struggling to pay her bills and see if there is anything they could do about her tariff. The customer was reminded that it was important that she took action to resolve her situation but there was help available. An appointment was made with a Cumbria County Council supporting people local area co-ordinator (LAC) to address concerns about her housing situation.

The LAC and the customer reviewed the customer's housing situation which was simply unaffordable due to her rented home being in Cockermouth. She was advised to register with Cumbria Choice based lettings and seek more affordable accommodation. The customer was given a foodbank voucher to address her need for food.

Case study re furniture:

There are numbers of people who are contacting Ways to welfare for assistance with furniture. Depending on their circumstances, we may link the person with Impact Housing Association to access recycled basic furniture.

Review process

The Way to Welfare team are currently completing a comprehensive review of the first six months of service delivery. The purpose of the review is to;

- Understand the outcome from a customer perspective
- Capture feedback from stakeholders
- Report on the demands of service during first six months
- Identify any gaps in support provision across the county
- Determine where grant funding should be awarded

Grant funding

The Ways to welfare has allocated funding to ensure service provision, advice and support is available to meet the needs of people in crisis or facing severe hardship at local level. Once the six month report is completed, grant funding will be available to develop localities to meet need.

To find out more, please contact Julie Batsford or Deborah Turner on 01228 226104

The CAN team will be emailing network members in due course with details of the Stakeholder feedback questionnaire which is being used as part of the review process.

FOCUS ON



Home improvement agencies assist vulnerable homeowners and private sector tenants who are older, disabled or on a low income to repair, improve, maintain or adapt their homes. There are approximately 200 home improvement agencies in England, and over 80% of residents in England have access to a home improvement agency. Carlisle City Council's Home Improvement agency (or H.I.A.) was accredited by Foundations, the national governing body for Home Improvement Agencies, in July 2012 and is continually developing and expanding the range of services that it offers.

Home improvement and handyperson service providers are local organisations dedicated to helping older people, people with disabilities, and vulnerable people to live in safety and with dignity in their own homes.

Services are focused on ensuring that existing housing is fit for purpose and that vulnerable people, predominantly homeowners, are able to continue living independently as long as possible.

We offer holistic home assessments to make sure that clients are accessing all the help that is available for them.

How can Homelife Carlisle home improvement agency help?

Keeping Warm

Help for Fuel Poverty

All of us need to keep warm and save money on our bills so we've teamed up with SIG energy management to deliver the affordable warmth. The programme can provide boiler repairs and replacements, wall and loft insulation and other products to make your home more energy efficient. Insulation or a better heating system can have a significant impact on your bills saving you money and making your home warmer.

We can assess your home and for people on certain welfare benefits, living in certain areas, property types or those not connected to mains gas, some of the measures are free. Even if you are not in receipt of benefits you may still be eligible for free measures. Affordable warmth is targeted to people who own their own home or are living in privately rented accommodation. If there is extra work that is can not be met through ECO funding, Homelife Carlisle has access to grants including Foundations Independent Living Trust - Health through Warmth grants as well as assisting clients to apply for other charitable grants to help fund the measures.

Managed Repair service

Our managed repair service includes help with assessing work that is required, overseeing the work through to completion, obtaining quotes from reputable contractors and help looking for funding options if required. Homelife Carlisle has access to a wide range of assistance including grants to help people remain healthy, warm, safe and secure in your home.

Advice is free but if households decide to go ahead with the work an agency fee is payable, although this can often be included in any eligible grants. It is your decision whether you want the home improvement agency to help, and any costs will be discussed and agreed with you first.

Handyperson and Gardening Service

Our trusted handyperson and gardening service is offered at a rate of £22.50 per hour. The rate is cheaper if the handyperson/gardener is booked for a whole or part day.

Homelife Carlisle also offers a **draught-proofing service** at a rate of £19.63 per hour plus the cost of materials.

Keeping Safe



Homelife Carlisle has Electrical Safety Council grants available for electrical safety work. This includes periodic inspections, Portable Appliance Testing (PAT), Repairs/ replacement of lighting for electrical safety reasons, repairs/replacement of electrically powered showers, immersion and water heaters, relocation or installation of additional electrical sockets to make them more accessible, replacement of broken electrical accessories such as light switches and sockets, necessary upgrading of earthing, bonding and consumer units for safety reasons, contribution towards the cost of a full or part electrical rewire.

Who can apply for a beneficiary grant?

Home owners in the Carlisle and District local authority who are at least 60 years of age and who also meet one or more of the following criteria:

In receipt of state pension only (with no other sources of income or savings); or

In receipt of means-tested benefit; or

Registered disabled.

Home owners who are at least 21 years of age who are registered disabled

How much per household?

Grants up to a maximum of **£500** can be awarded **per beneficiary** with only one award per household.

Victims of anti-social behaviour

Homelife scheme in conjunction with Cumbria Police has a FREE scheme to assist victims of anti-social behaviour in the Carlisle and District area. Our free home safety check offers free crime prevention measures such as door locks, door chains, security lighting, bin locks or other small-scale measures as appropriate.

Please contact Homelife Carlisle or complete the Keep Safe leaflet if you would like to find out more.

Sanctuary scheme

In conjunction with the Community safety unit of the Police, Homelife Carlisle can assist in providing home security measures for high-risk victims of domestic and sexual violence. Any referrals should be made to the Community safety Unit of Cumbria Police.

Keeping well

Homelife Carlisle can remove stairlifts that are less than 10 years old and recycle them. We can also offer refurbished stairlifts including 5 year warranties.

Hospital discharge



Homelife Carlisle is also working with NHS Partnership Trust 'Mrs Carlisle' health project to integrate housing with social care and health. We have recently recruited a caseworker to assist speed up hospital discharge and housing options work.

Community Neighbours

Carlisle City Council in conjunction with 'Mrs Carlisle' have a Community Neighbours volunteer project to provide friendship and support to elderly people in their homes.

For more information and to access grants:

Telephone: 01228 817111

Email: homelife@carlisle.gov.uk

Webpage: www.carlisle.gov.uk/homelife

CAN TRAINING PROGRAMME

Course Title: Antisocial Behaviour and Harassment

Trainer: Shelter

Date: Friday 7th March

Time: 10:00am – 4.30pm (registration from 9.30am)

Venue: Penrith Methodist Church

Places Available: 16

5 CPD Hours

Course objectives and content

- Preventing antisocial behaviour in social housing
- Introductory and demoted tenancies
- Mediation and acceptable behaviour contracts
- Multi-agency working and data sharing
- Possession action where the issue is antisocial behaviour
- Antisocial Behaviour Orders (ASBOs)
- Injunctions
- The law on nuisance
- The 'Respect Agenda'
- Good practice in the gathering of evidence.

Learning outcomes

After this course, you will be able to:

- Consider the viability of measures for preventing antisocial behaviour
- Know when, and how, access to mediation or acceptable behaviour contracts is appropriate
- Seek injunctions
- Pursue possession actions, where the issue is antisocial behaviour
- Decide whether or not the complaint is nuisance
- Manage antisocial behaviour cases more effectively
- Appreciate the need for multi-agency working, especially with regard to evidence gathering and assistance in pursuing legal remedies.

Suitable for

Frontline housing staff and housing managers, staff responsible for developing antisocial behaviour strategies, and advisers and support workers.

CAN TRAINING PROGRAMME

Course Title: Housing Benefit and Welfare Reform

Trainer: Shelter

Date: Thursday 21st February

Time: 10:00am – 4.30pm (registration from 9.30am)

Venue: Penrith Methodist Church

Places Available: 25

Course Content

This course will provide guidance on

- background to the changes i.e. consideration of the 'explanatory memorandum for the social security advisory committee'
- the bedroom tax, size criteria and related issues including HB circular on who/what defines a room
- housing benefit eligibility under Universal Credit
- housing benefit/overpayments/appeals/backdating/recovery affordability and statutory homelessness
- DHP guidance for under occupancy/benefit cap - what are DHP's for and how they will be assessed/given
- judicial review post 1 April 2013
- how to formulate a DHP application (making yours stand out) case study/exercise

CAN TRAINING PROGRAMME

How do I book a place?

By completing the booking form under the training section on our website and returning it to maria.hewitt@hotmail.co.uk. Places on our courses are limited so please book early to avoid disappointment.

How are places allocated?

Places will be allocated on a first come first served basis and a maximum of two places per organisation can be booked (unless otherwise stated). If you have more than two people wanting to attend please let us know and we will contact you if places become available.

Is the course suitable for me ?

We are keen to ensure that CAN members get the maximum benefit from our courses. We include details of the level of experience required for all our courses. If you would like further information, please contact Maria via the email address above.

What is the cost?

Places on our courses are **FREE** to network members. When completing the booking form please remember to state your training number (available from your Network Champion). Although places are free a £50.00 charge will be made for non attendance or cancellation without 48 hours notice.

If you have a training requirement, or offer training which you think will be valuable to CAN members, please email Maria, maria.hewitt@hotmail.co.uk

We say goodbye to our Network Champion Shelley Hewitson.

Shelley has been with CAN since September 2009 and has made an invaluable contribution to the project. We will miss her enthusiasm and hard work.

Shelley is now the Deputy Manager at Copeland Citizens Advice Bureau. She continues to be a huge supporter of CAN and we know that we will still be seeing her. We wish her all the best in her new role.

Keep in Touch

If you would like to know more about any aspect of CAN just let us know by contacting your local champion

Allerdale: Maria Hewitt 01900 604735 maria.hewitt@hotmail.co.uk
Barrow: Helen Robinson 07921 194110 rumelon1@yahoo.co.uk
Carlisle: Margie Cooper 01228 633909 highrowresearch@aol.com
Copeland: Maria Hewitt 01900 604735 maria.hewitt@hotmail.co.uk
Eden: Margie Cooper 01228 633909 highrowresearch@aol.com
South Lakes: Helen Robinson 07921194110 rumelon1@yahoo.co.uk
County: Mandy Pflieger 01900 604735 mandypflieger@hotmail.com

Champion Hours are 3.5 per week . We will respond to your emails as quickly as possible and certainly within a week.

www.cumbriaadvicenetwork.org.uk

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