

Cumbria Advice

Network

August 2009

What is the Cumbria Advice Network ?

How often have you needed to refer clients to a specialist advice service, but you have been unsure what is available in Cumbria and how these services operate ?

Well, a new project has started which is aiming to make things better.

The Cumbria Advice Network (CAN) is a 5 year project funded by the Big Lottery Fund. The project is managed by Citizens Advice Cumbria with the Community Law Centre Carlisle and Shelter Cumbria.

Our aim is to ensure that all people in Cumbria, particularly those in greatest need, have access to a comprehensive, seamless and efficient social welfare legal advice

service.

At the moment, advice agencies in Cumbria use lots of different mechanisms to diagnose queries and refer clients to the most appropriate advice service.

Links between agencies are sometimes limited and there is not always a clear understanding of the specialist services available within different agencies.

This can be confusing for those working in these agencies, and for our clients, who are sometimes passed from one agency to another. This project aims to rationalise referral practices and introduce a robust, easy to use, practical approach.

This will improve the effectiveness of our services, by widening access and providing faster, more co-ordinated responses to our clients. Our improved working relationships will enable us to share expertise, and raise skills and knowledge through training and discussion. This will ensure that there is a consistently high standard of service across the network.

The project is managed by Martin Telford, bureau manager at Citizens Advice Allerdale. Martin reports to a Steering Group, made up of representatives of the initial partners, who have strategic oversight of the project.



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Who can be involved ?

CAN has the potential to involve everyone in the 3rd sector!

The initial partners are Citizens Advice Cumbria, Community Law Centre, Carlisle and Shelter Cumbria. But we want to keep as many people as possible up-to-date with the project, provide easy ways of sharing ideas and experiences and develop a wide network of

contacts. We are already looking at what advice services are provided by the initial partners and how they are delivered, but we hope to extend this and develop a more comprehensive and integrated network. This could include a whole range of organisations including advice providers, single issue societies and other groups in

the local community who have the opportunity to provide information and refer people to advice agencies.

We are here to co-ordinate information and ideas and look at how we can most effectively join up service provision. To make CAN really work we need your help!



What difference will CAN make ?

Crucially, the CAN project is all about improving access to advice services for our clients across Cumbria. Our aim is to ensure that those services are consistent and of a high quality.

We firmly believe that there are also benefits for all the organisations that become involved in the network.

There will be opportunities to share best practice between network members, opportunities for staff development and training

and we can help organisations to achieve quality marks if they wish to do so.

There will be improved access to information for advisers, so that they know which organisations provide which services and how they can refer clients to those services.

We hope that the project will lead to more collaborative working, an improved, consistent referral process and better management of

an increasing number of cases across the Network.

The project team can support organisations who wish to be involved in the Network, for example by helping them to map their current processes and services and joining them up with other service providers.

It is a challenging project but one that can make a real difference.

We're aiming to improve access to advice services for everyone in Cumbria

We have already started to build up a picture of advice services in Cumbria

What has been happening?

The project got fully underway in June when the Development Champions took up post.

Initial work has started to build up a picture of all the existing advice services that are available to clients in Cumbria, and how referral and signposting to those advice services currently works in practice.

The champions have been comparing how current processes and services are

working in their own organisations.

The initial partner organisations are in the process of recruiting Network Champions. They will help us to continue to build up the picture.

Over the coming months, and with the help of third sector organisations throughout Cumbria, we hope the project will identify lots of good practice and exciting opportunities for

development.

The project is still in its very early stages, so look out for more information in future newsletters.

Event News

As part of the project there will be plenty of opportunities for Network members to get together, share ideas and best practice and work together to improve access to, and quality of advice services across the county.

We are already planning two events. On 12th November we will hold a network event for the initial partner organisations to

share skills and experience of the referral process.

In January 2010 we will be holding the first CAN conference where we hope to bring together a wide range of organisations who are interested in being involved in the Network

Further details on both events will be sent out to you as soon as they are finalised.

Providing opportunities to share best practice

We are the Champions!



Mandy



Steve



Paul



Martin

Mandy is the Development Champion for the North of Cumbria covering Allerdale, Copeland and Carlisle. She is based in Allerdale Citizens Advice in Workington. Mandy is a qualified information professional with lots of experience of service delivery. She has been a volunteer adviser in Allerdale since November 2007.

Steve is the Development Champion for the South of Cumbria covering South Lakeland, Barrow, Windermere and Eden. He is based in Citizens Advice South Lakeland in Kendal. When not working on the CAN project, he is a volunteer adviser at the bureau in Kendal where he has been advising for

over 2 years. He also co-ordinates a project to provide financial skills training within the local community.

Paul im Thurn is the Quality Champion for the project. He qualified as a solicitor in 1990 and has worked in law centres for 16 years, specialising in housing, homelessness, community care and education law. He is the manager and senior solicitor at the Community Law Centre

Martin is our project manager. He worked for the Community Information and Action Centre and the Youth Enquiry Service before joining Allerdale Citizens Advice Bureau where he has worked for 16 years.

Who to contact

Together we CAN

If you would like further information on any aspect of the CAN project or a chat about how to become involved you can contact Mandy Pflieger, Development Champion for North Cumbria on 01900 604735 email mandypflieger@hotmail.com or Steve Troake, Development Champion for South Cumbria on 01539 728892 email steve.troake@cabsouthlakeland.org.uk

The next newsletter will be sent out in 3 months time.

If you know of anyone who would be interested in this newsletter, please pass it on to them.

If you have received the newsletter from someone else and would like to be added to the mailing list, please email network@can.cabnet.org.uk