

Cumbria Advice Network



Spring 2010

Issue 3

**“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much”
Helen Keller**

The first Cumbria Advice Network (CAN) annual conference took place on 20 January.

There was a brief respite in the cold weather, just in time to enable 85 people from a range of advice organisations from across the third sector in Cumbria to attend an enjoyable and successful day. This was an opportunity to launch the project, consult and communicate, and for advice organisations to meet together, make new contacts and catch up with colleagues

The event was opened by Stewart Young, the Deputy Leader of Cumbria County Council. Stewart thanked the organisations present for the work they have done over the years to help the people of Cumbria. Stewart added “Through your partnership work, you are in the process of making your services easier for people to find, easier to use, and more responsive to people’s needs. Using these combined resources efficiently and effectively will achieve a comprehensive, quality service

that reaches across the county”

There were breakout sessions to discuss and consult on the referral and quality elements of the project (see later in this newsletter). We will be building comments and ideas into the project planning.

Peter Young, Money Advice Supervisor at Barrow CAB led a Debt Caseworker forum covering Debt Relief Orders, Mortgage Rescue Schemes and Local Authority Collection Methods.

Colin Henderson, Community Housing Solicitor with CASL led the Housing Caseworker Forum covering a range of issues including temporary accommodation and homelessness, housing in the private sector and housing and immigration.

Both sessions were well attended and produced some lively debate!



Stewart Young

“All of you here today, from the wide variety of organisations you represent, have a part to play to achieve better access and quality of service for people in need”

Stewart Young

Conference continued.....

Barbara Bowers provided some background on the other lottery funded advice network projects running throughout the country, led by a range of advice organisations.

We have received a very positive reaction to the event. We have also received constructive comments on what you would like to see covered in future events.

Thank you to everyone who came along and participated in a very useful day.



“It has been a very good event to meet other people from other organisations – comparing and contrasting work that has been done in Cumbria.”

A satisfied delegate

CAN WEBSITE



Those present at the conference saw a demonstration of the prototype CAN website.

The website will include

- dedicated space for each network member to detail their advice services and how they can be accessed;
- details of Cumbria wide training events and Quality related issues;
- latest developments and news on the project.

The website will be for use by advice organisations. It will also be a resource for clients to directly access information on services.

We are very interested in your thoughts and ideas on what you would like to see on the website. So please get in touch.

We will let you know when the website is officially launched and provide details of how you can access the site and how you can provide content.



Referral Processes

At the annual conference we received useful feedback on the barriers to referrals, opportunities for referrals and areas of good practice.

The discussion was similar to the Network Event for initial partners held in November. In terms of barriers the key points were:

- Lack of knowledge of advice services and the criteria for making referrals. This can lead to clients being passed from pillar to post;
- Lack of up-to-date contact information;
- Lack of feedback following referrals.

The sessions identified a range of opportunities for improving the referral process, including:

- Developing a website (we're working on it!)
- Streamlining paperwork
- Using common terminology

We will be looking carefully at all the points raised as we develop the common referral process. We will also follow up the many areas of good practice identified at the conference to see where we can share them with the wider network.

IT solutions form one part of the referral process. The project aims to identify and implement an electronic booking system for use with the common referral process. This will be tried out in the initial partners (the 7 CABs, Shelter Cumbria and the Cumbria Law Centre) and will be made available for use by the wider network of advice organisations.

We understand nationally discussions have begun with Advice Services Alliance, Law Centres Federation and Advice UK, facilitated by the Big Lottery Fund, about a sector wide electronic referral system. There are two strands to it, an interim solution to meet agencies immediate needs and a longer term outcome.

For strategic reasons we are awaiting the outcomes of these discussions before committing to an electronic appointment booking system.

Campaigning for Change

“This amplified voice will enable us all to take forward issues to effect change for the people of Cumbria”

Sue Buckwell

The Campaigning for Change element of CAN involves bringing together evidence on issues from throughout the network of third sector advice providers in Cumbria. These will be issues identified by advice agencies through the course of advising clients.

By pooling this evidence (without identifying individual clients) we can effect change so these problems don't re-occur in the future. We are now calling this element of the project “Campaigning for Change” rather than Social Policy to avoid terminology specific to any one advice agency.

At the end of January, project staff, including representatives from Shelter Cumbria and the Cumbria Law Centre, were invited along to a meeting of the CAB Social Policy Group to discuss this area of the project and how best to fully include the wider network of advice agencies in Cumbria.

Sue Buckwell, Chair of the CAB Cumbria Social Policy Group said “I am very pleased that the Cumbria Advice Network has a campaigning element. There is already a lot of very good work taking place by dedicated campaigners throughout the county. CAN will be able to enhance this work by providing a mechanism to collate firm evidence on issues from a wide range of advice agencies. This amplified voice will enable us all to take forward issues to effect change for the people of Cumbria”

The next stage is for us to produce our first Campaigning for Change Bulletin. This will highlight current issues and act as a 'call for evidence' from wider network organisations.

Spotlight on Rebecca Colpus

I am the Network Champion for the Cumbria Rural CAB and Eden CAB. I have recently moved to Cumbria with my husband to be nearer family after 18 years in Mid Wales, another area of wonderful scenery, low population and limited services.



My working past is over 15 years working in the charitable sector, including developing and managing the local Age Concern and as a development officer and trainer with the local CVS and other voluntary groups. I worked with the Montgomeryshire CAB for 3 years with a debt and benefit advice project.

My current interests are gardening, family history research and oil painting. I also play the guitar and trombone and sing. Before moving I was a Lay Reader in the Church of Wales and an active Fair Trader. I have now taken up the Lay Reader role in the Brough area.

JOINING THE NETWORK

The recent Conference introduced the Cumbria Advice Network to the wider advice sector within the county. By working together as a network we put the needs of those seeking advice first.

The network is free to join and has a great range of benefits for any organisation involved in advice work.

So if your organisation provides advice and wishes to be able to refer individuals for advice to other organisations with ease, then why not join us? 21 organisations have joined the Network since the conference.

In signing up you will become part of an agreed system for referring individuals between network members – so that the individual can receive the most appropriate, convenient and timely advice.

The referral system is in embryonic form at present and as a member you can influence how this will operate. You will also have the opportunity to be part of the CAN website; allowing other members, advice agencies and the public to find out what you provide.

Sound good so far? Well there are still more positive reasons for joining!

You will be able to request a training needs analysis and have access to free or subsidised local training events which will work towards CPD for your advisers whenever possible.

Campaigning for change is part of the remit of the network so your input will be a valuable part of building up evidence of

issues needed to be raised at county, regional and even national level.

Your views on how the network operates will also be welcome.

As a network member you will receive support from the CAN team to get involved, benefit from and contribute to the network.

So what does the network ask of you?

Basically to be proactive! We will be working to develop ways for you to refer and signpost clients where appropriate and processes to input evidence for campaigning for change. We will encourage you to take up training offered and open your advice service to appropriate referrals from other members once agreed systems have been developed.

The network has an aim to improve advice giving and so, as a member, we will encourage your organisation to continue to strive for best practice and contribute to network events and forums to this aim.

So don't delay – get on board with the Cumbria Advice Network – we are stronger together. **Together we CAN make a difference.**

For more information and to join, contact your local Network Champion or email network@can.cabnet.org

We look forward to getting to know you.

Joining the Network is free and will offer organisations a range of benefits

QUALITY CORNER



Paul leads the debate

Part of the vision of the Cumbria Advice Network is that we work together to improve the quality of what we can offer to our clients across the county.

In a lively discussion at the launch conference, delegates shared with me their reactions to this vision with thought provoking results. The road ahead is full of difficulties, but the benefits of getting it right could be huge.

Our discussions touched on quality marking. Now that the LSC has said it will no longer maintain its own quality marks, we need to make sure we are able to proclaim the quality of what we do.

There are commercial companies out there who want to compete with us, but who do not respect the need for quality service that our clients are entitled to expect.

The Advice Services Alliance is working on a new quality standard, and I will keep everyone posted as this emerges at national level.

The most obvious and immediate benefit is training. We can use our buying-power as a network to bring in low cost, high quality training from the big national providers, right here on our doorstep.

Exactly what training we decide to put on depends on finding out what is needed and what you ask for!

Part of the process of assessing your training needs is the Training Needs Analysis the network champions are already working on with initial partners. This will give us an evidence base on which to devise the training programme for the next year.

These events will of course be open to the wider network.

Paul im Thurn



Achieving Financial Inclusion

Cumbria's Rural Dimensions

Date: March 30th 2010, commencing at 09.30

Venue: Cumbria Rural Enterprise Agency, Redhills, Penrith CA11 0DT

The economic crisis of the last two years has highlighted the challenges faced by those who are financially isolated, lacking the capability or opportunity to access those basic financial services and products that they need in order to participate fully in modern day society. These include access to:

- Affordable and responsible credit
- An appropriate bank account
- Face-to-face debt advice
- Basic home contents insurance
- Savings

This **Cumbria Rural Forum** conference will offer delegates the opportunity to learn from national experience about the impact of financial exclusion on rural communities and hear case studies that reflect both the problem and possible solutions.

We will then involve delegates in exploring some of the practical actions that need to be taken in Cumbria if sustainable long term solutions are to be developed and delivered that will meet the needs of the County's rural as well as its urban residents.

To reserve a place please contact Dani Hudson at ACT on 01768 840837 or by email at danihudson@cumbriaaction.org.uk

Please note—this event was postponed from 25th November 2009 due to the Cumbria floods.

Join the Team!

Cumbria Advice Network

Network Champion

1 day per week for 18 months, reduced hours in next 3 years

Salary is likely to be paid in the range £19,621/ £22,958 Pro Rata.

Post based in Carlisle and District Citizens Advice Bureau

Hours can be worked flexibly

Contract expires May 2014.

The aim of the Cumbria Advice Network project is to ensure that all people in Cumbria, particularly those in greatest need, have access to a comprehensive, seamless and efficient social welfare advice service.

This is an opportunity to be involved right at the heart of the project. The Network Champion will help to develop and implement improved systems and procedures, train network members in these improvements and promote the project across the third sector.

Experience of the Voluntary Sector, advice work, and training would be an advantage.

The Citizens Advice service recognises the positive value of diversity, promotes equality and fairness, and challenges discrimination.

For an application pack (No C.V.'s accepted) contact: Citizens Advice Allerdale,
Tel 01900 604735 Email: allerdale@cabnet.org.uk

For further information, please contact Martin Telford on the above phone number.

The **Closing Date** for receipt of applications is **noon on Monday 29th March 2010.**

Keep in Touch

The next newsletter will be sent out in 3 months time. If you would like a copy of our August or November newsletters please let us know.

If you know of anyone who would be interested in this newsletter, please pass it on to them. For further information on any aspect of the CAN project or a chat about how to become involved you can contact your nearest Network Champion.

Carolyn Moffat (Kendal) on 0344 5151947, email: Carolyn_Moffat@shelter.org.uk
Hazel Bowmaker (Carlisle) on 01228 515129, email: hazelbowmaker@comlaw.co.uk
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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

You can also email network@can.cabnet.org if you were unable to attend the conference and would like copies of the powerpoint slides and the joining the network documents.



The project team, from left, Martin Telford, Rebecca Colpus, John Thompson, Carolyn Moffat, Steve Troake, Simon Pollitt, Helen Robinson, Shelley Grace, Mandy Pflieger, Hazel Bowmaker, Paul im Thurn