

Cumbria Advice Network



Spring 2011

Issue 7

**“DO YOUR LITTLE BIT OF GOOD WHERE YOU ARE; IT’S
THOSE LITTLE BITS OF GOOD PUT TOGETHER THAT
OVERWHELM THE WORLD”** **DESMOND TUTU**

We now have 116 members

Focus on Mind West Cumbria’s
“Get Talking” Campaign on page 3

Focus on Workbase a social
enterprise established in
1998 to serve the needs of
people with mental health
difficulties.

Turn to page 6 to find out
more

Can you help with a
project mapping foreign
workers and their
families in the
Workington area? See
page 7 for details.

Find out what the new Choice Based
Letting Scheme is all about on page 4

Plus: updates on referral and working together, campaigning
for change and our training programme

Together we CAN make a difference

www.cumbriaadvicenetwork.org.uk

Referral and Working Together

Following feedback from the conference we have slightly changed the layout of the website so that all network members are listed alphabetically on the menu. On the main network member page we have categorised members by district so that it is easier to see which organisations can help clients in your local area. 56 members have now provided information for their webpage. For each member we are including details of “How to refer to this organisation”. This can be plain text, a link to a form, or a link to the organisation’s website.

Are you on the website yet ? The website is being well used on a daily basis: In February we had 619 unique users, in March 838 and in April 668 (not bad considering all those bank holidays!). So, it is an ideal place to showcase your organisation and highlight the services you provide. We have also developed a Members’ Noticeboard where you can advertise events, courses, new projects or anything you think will be of interest to the network. Contact your nearest network champion to talk about adding content.

Do you have any comments on the website ? Anything you would like to see ? If so email Mandy Pfleger at mandypfleger@hotmail.com

Electronic appointment booking/ referral system

To complement the website we are considering options for an IT System which enables organisations to refer to each other either via a diary or via an accept and reject mechanism. Phil Carter (Network Champion for Citizens Advice South Lakeland and Cumbria Rural) has done lots of work looking at the options and we have concluded that a system called Nellbooker may offer potential benefits to network members (see Myth Buster below!)

So we are going to run a pilot to test the system, see if it realises benefits and assess the potential for other network members.

Phase 1 (commencing in August) Eden Citizens Advice Bureau and Cumbria Law Centre

Phase 2 (provisionally commencing in September) roll-out to Carlisle Citizens Advice Bureau and Allerdale Citizens Advice Bureau.

MYTH BUSTER I’ve heard that if you join CAN you have to use their common referral system **FALSE** We know that many of our members have effective systems in place and we don’t want to change that. We encourage members to describe their processes on their CAN webpage so that referring organisations can see what they need to do. We are also developing a toolkit of templates to help organisations that want to develop their referral mechanisms.

The pilot of the IT solution may be of interest to members in the longer term, but nobody will be forced to use it.

Focus on Mind in West Cumbria



GET TALKING!

For better
mental health

1 in 4 people will experience mental ill health at some point in their life, it's often misunderstood and hard to recognise for what it is. As a consequence, people affected can attract a negative response from those who don't understand what they are experiencing. At its worst, bullying and abuse may occur and that may be enough to make people feel worried about going out and feelings of exclusion may occur. Nine out of ten people affected by mental ill health have experienced discrimination and this may be their biggest issue.

The impact of mental ill health may affect employment and relationships. As a result, many people are suffering; living in poverty, without work and alone. Their chances of gaining employment may be significantly reduced and so adds to social exclusion. It's also important to remember, whatever pressures people with mental ill health have to cope with, are often also experienced by carers and family members.

When we see differences, we might feel threatened and avoid contact. People often take just 10 seconds to judge someone when you first meet them; all of us do this on a number of levels, such as clothes, grooming and speech. People need to understand that those with mental ill health may not be able to care for themselves as they have done in the past, people should make allowances for that when they make judgements. Individuals who are not affected by mental ill health need to recognise they can do something. Don't cut people off- be there for them.

Mind West Cumbria is launching its' Get Talking campaign which includes local community projects and a high-profile anti-stigma campaign. The campaign can be delivered for free through a presentation and/ or open discussion about what mental health (and ill health) actually is and what it feels like to be on the resulting end of discrimination.

If you would like to know more about Get Talking or would like to book a session contact Suzanne on 01900 268116.





Choice Based Lettings

What is it?

Cumbria Choice Based Lettings Scheme is a new way to apply for Council and Housing Association properties from April 2011. This is a partnership between the 6 District Authorities and 7 social housing providers. This scheme is for letting the majority of social rented property in Cumbria through a Common Housing Register.

The scheme will give applicants choice over where they want to live rather than the Council or Housing Association offering you what is available.

This will be managed on a web based system and customers will have access to the site to:

- Register on line
- View property adverts
- Monitor the progress of their application

The site will be used to administer the system and to allocate property. You do not have to have a computer to use the scheme.

Applications can be requested in the usual way and advertising on property News Sheets will be available in Council and Housing offices and other appropriate public places. The majority of properties will be advertised and customers will be able to exercise choice by registering an interest in the property known as 'bidding'. Customers will only be able to bid for a property that meets their requirements, for example, an adapted property for people with a medical need.

Priority for housing will be awarded through a banding system that places an applicant in one of four bands according to their housing need. A shortlist will be compiled taking into account, the band the applicant is in, their application date and any local connection.

If a customer wants to apply for Council Housing or Housing Association Housing from April 2011 **they will only have to fill out one form to cover all Cumbria.**

What an applicant needs to do:

If a customer is already on a housing waiting list, they will have been sent a form in the New Year to apply to the new list. **They must complete this form** to be eligible for housing. The points they already have will be taken into consideration for the new process.

If a customer is on more than one waiting list (e.g. council and housing association) **they only need to complete one form** as they are all recorded centrally.

A customer's time on the existing list will be taken into consideration when they are given a "band" for the new list (once the new application has been processed).

If a customer wants to apply for housing and is not already registered, they will only have to fill out one form to be eligible for council and housing association properties in Cumbria.

FOCUS ON: WORKBASE



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Workbase, situated in the south of Cumbria, is a small social enterprise established in 1998 to serve the needs of people with mental health difficulties. We run a desk top publishing workshop dealing with the public, printing newsletters, business stationery, publicity materials. We also have an active Arts and Crafts department where good quality items are produced which sell at local shows and events. A number of our 'artists' have been involved in exhibitions and sold their work . There is a kitchen garden at the back of the building providing vegetables for lunches cooked on site and enjoyed by those who wish.

Most usually people coping with a mental health difficulty will be referred here by professionals working at Westmorland General Hospital (the Community Mental Health Team). Occasionally GP's and Counsellors have enquired on behalf of the patients. More recently we have decided to open the building to individuals who may be struggling with emotional issues as a consequence of life events and we are offering a number of Well-being courses that can be paid for on a sessional basis.

If you are interested in seeing what we do check out our website www.workbase-kendal.co.uk, or give us a call and come for a visit.

The new course programme is also available on the CAN website.

Jane Sharpe

Manager

CAN YOU HELP ? Margaret Bremner explains the project she is undertaking relating to foreign workers and families in Workington and the surrounding area

I am doing this for the West Cumbria Equality & Diversity Partnership which is formed from representatives of many of the public services : Allerdale & Copeland Borough Councils, housing associations, education, health, disability, Fire & Rescue Service etc – and Allerdale CAB [myself]. I'm part-funded by Cumbria County Council [via Joel Rasbash through the Migration Impacts Fund].

Between January and June 2011 I'll be "interviewing" some of my fellow reps on the WC E&D Partnership to find out what involvement they have with the foreign workers in the Workington area, especially East Europeans, as they form the majority of the recent arrivals over the past few years, and what support is given. In addition I'm also talking to staff from the Cumbria Multi-Cultural Service [Gaz in Maryport], the JobCentrePlus, Trades Hall Centre, library, Action for Children, Skills for Life, Greg the Polish priest, the Head of St Patrick's Primary School and more. Perhaps some of you too? I have been given a warm welcome by all --- very many thanks.

Also I'm meeting families and workers from Eastern Europe, mainly Poles, Lithuanians and Slovaks who are the largest groups in West Cumbria to ask them about their life and work here [and in their own country] and what help they get or need and how they are involving themselves with life and people in Britain.

Then I shall write up my report with its conclusions. It's not a list of statistics I want to make but, hopefully, an overall picture of the impact of many foreigners into our previously rather closed West Cumbrian communities --- to see how they are merging, how greater multicultural understanding is developing and how West Cumbrians, new and old, can best be supported in the 21st century when Britain, including West Cumbria, is likely to experience many more arrivals from continental Europe, permanent or temporary.

Now – here comes the crunch!! If, after reading this, you feel that you have interesting experiences and useful information relating to the areas I'm investigating, please do contact me — I'd be really grateful. Thank you.

Margaret Bremner

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Margaret is a volunteer adviser with Allerdale Citizens Advice Bureau

CAMPAIGNING FOR CHANGE

Our aim is to gather evidence and encourage action, across the network, to effect change.

We want to positively influence behaviour, policies, legislation, practice and attitudes to improve people's lives.

We produce a quarterly "Call for Evidence Bulletin" which highlights issues affecting the people of Cumbria. The last bulletin included calls for evidence from Carlisle CAB, Cumbria Rural and Cumbria Law Centre. The focus was on Crisis Loans, Benefits and Debt.

CAN YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE ? If you have any evidence of the issues raised in our bulletins please let us know using the form at the back of the bulletin.

You can also use the Cumbria Advice Network to gather evidence on issues affecting **your** clients.

The Call for Evidence Bulletins are circulated to our mailing list and published on our website. Have you seen them ? How easy is it to gather and submit evidence on the issues raised ? Let us know your thoughts.

MYTH BUSTER I've heard that if you submit evidence on issues raised in the Campaigning for Change Bulletin you then have to actually run a campaign **FALSE** Any evidence you submit will be passed to the organisation that first raised the issue, in many cases this is so that it can inform a planned campaign by that organisation. Where an organisation does not have the resources to run a campaign we will look to see what we can do to help, and this also applies where you would like to raise an issue yourself. Campaigning is all about influencing behaviour, policies, legislation, practice and attitudes and the core work is to positively influence these elements to improve people's lives. There are lots of ways to campaign and it doesn't need to be labour intensive. Sometimes a letter to a particular organisation or body can highlight an issue that can then be easily resolved.

CAN TRAINING PROGRAMME

In April we organised CPAG training on Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit. Demand for the course was high so we ran it twice! A big thank you to Shelley Hewitson, Network Champion for Copeland who did a great job sorting out all the arrangements. 35 people from 25 organisations attended. Here is some of the feedback:

Excellent course, I would recommend it”

“Useful day’s work”

“One of the best tutor’s I’ve had on a benefits course”

“I learned a lot”

“Brilliant, thank you. Made what could have been a dull subject interesting”

“Left the course with a much better understanding of complex benefits”

Our next course on 4th May will be an advanced Debt Relief Orders course run by the Institute of Money Advice. The course is fully booked.

We’re now putting the final touches to our 2011 Training Programme which will be circulated to you and published on the website. Topics will include Employment and Support Allowance, Vulnerable Clients: safeguarding and issues for advisers and Foundation in Housing Advice and Law Part A provided by Shelter.

Do you want to provide training to network members ?

Can your organisation provide training on specific areas which would be useful for Network Members ? (such as the “Get Talking” campaign described on page 3) We are looking at drawing up an inter-agency training programme at a local level.

If you are interested contact your Network Champion.

MYTH BUSTER I’ve heard that CAN members have access to free training courses **TRUE** What’s more you can influence our training programme by letting your network champion know what courses you need. We will do our best to help. All our courses are free to members, however, if you cancel with less than 48 hours notice we may have to charge you for unrecoverable costs.

Spotlight on Carolyn Moffat, our Network Champion at Shelter



This is me note taking at our 2nd Conference held at Rheged in January this year. I feel very privileged to be part of this groundbreaking and innovative project. I have enjoyed meeting so many hardworking people in Cumbria and encouraged them to join us and share our passion for enhancing the valuable work that we all do for our Clients. The Network is such a force for good communication and joined up working for us all especially now in these ever changing times.

I already had many local longstanding business connections and it has been great renewing friendships and making new contacts. I was involved in the inception of the South Lakes Neighbourhood Forum and now the Cumbria Advice Network has taken me further afield in the County. I hope my enthusiasm rubs off and encourages you to spread the word. I firmly believe that our Clients will gain from our ever expanding network which are needed more than ever in these challenging times.

I have lived in Cumbria for nearly 30 years now and worked for Leck Construction, Home Housing and am currently with Shelter. My family and I have participated in many local groups and school committees over the years. We have all enjoyed participating in the many and varied aspects of life that Cumbria has to offer us all. I fervently hope that we can all help others to attain the advice and assistance that we all need at some point in our lives.

Our Champions

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