

# Cumbria Advice Network



Summer 2012

Issue 12

**“I HAVE BEEN IMPRESSED WITH THE URGENCY OF DOING. KNOWING IS NOT ENOUGH; WE MUST APPLY. BEING WILLING IS NOT ENOUGH, WE MUST DO.”**

**LEONARDO DA VINCI**

We are urging all our members to check that their webpage is up-to-date. Does yours look like the screen shot on page 2 ? If not we need to know.

In this issue we look at the changes to Social Housing Law on pages 8 to 11 and highlight important Campaigning Issues on page 17.

Find out all about the Best Life Advocacy Project on pages 4 to 7.

Our training programme is on pages 12 to 15. We also announce exciting plans for an Advice Shop event in Carlisle on page 16.

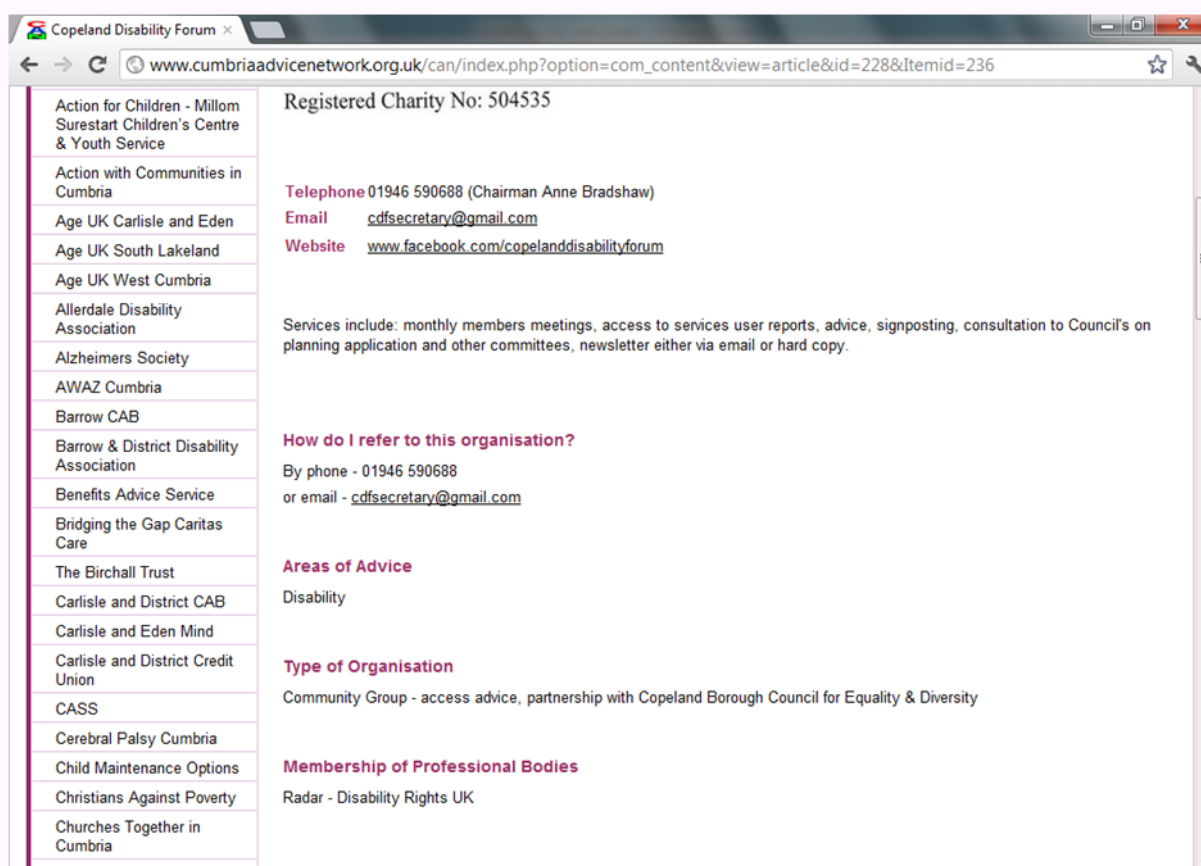
**Together we CAN make a difference**

**[www.cumbriaadvicenetwork.org.uk](http://www.cumbriaadvicenetwork.org.uk)**

# Updating your web pages

As reported in the Spring Newsletter, Network Champions have been contacting members to ensure their webpage is up to date and accurate. There are now 25 organisations that have updated versions of the webpage which include a list of the areas of advice the member covers, the type of organisation they are, what quality marks they have and their membership of professional bodies. This information helps to build up a picture of the organisation a client is being referred or signposted to.

Here is the Copeland Disability Forum page:



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL [www.cumbriaadvicenetwork.org.uk/can/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=228&Itemid=236](http://www.cumbriaadvicenetwork.org.uk/can/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=228&Itemid=236). The page content is as follows:

Action for Children - Millom Surestart Children's Centre & Youth Service	Registered Charity No: 504535
Action with Communities in Cumbria	Telephone 01946 590688 (Chairman Anne Bradshaw)
Age UK Carlisle and Eden	Email <a href="mailto:cdfsecretary@gmail.com">cdfsecretary@gmail.com</a>
Age UK South Lakeland	Website <a href="http://www.facebook.com/copelanddisabilityforum">www.facebook.com/copelanddisabilityforum</a>
Age UK West Cumbria	
Allerdale Disability Association	Services include: monthly members meetings, access to services user reports, advice, signposting, consultation to Council's on planning application and other committees, newsletter either via email or hard copy.
Alzheimers Society	
AWAZ Cumbria	
Barrow CAB	
Barrow & District Disability Association	<b>How do I refer to this organisation?</b>
Benefits Advice Service	By phone - 01946 590688
Bridging the Gap Caritas Care	or email - <a href="mailto:cdfsecretary@gmail.com">cdfsecretary@gmail.com</a>
The Birchall Trust	<b>Areas of Advice</b>
Carlisle and District CAB	Disability
Carlisle and Eden Mind	
Carlisle and District Credit Union	<b>Type of Organisation</b>
CASS	Community Group - access advice, partnership with Copeland Borough Council for Equality & Diversity
Cerebral Palsy Cumbria	
Child Maintenance Options	<b>Membership of Professional Bodies</b>
Christians Against Poverty	Radar - Disability Rights UK
Churches Together in Cumbria	

If you do have a webpage please check the information is current.

If you haven't filled in Appendix A of the joining form or a website template please do so – the forms can be downloaded from the Network Members Noticeboard section of the website.

Please return forms to [maria.hewitt@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:maria.hewitt@hotmail.co.uk). Any amendments you'd like to make to your page can also be sent to this address.

## Nellbooker: making a difference through effective referral

The pilot has now ended and we are delighted that Cumbria Law Centre and Carlisle CAB have both decided to continue using the system for referrals. Both organisations found the software easy to use and very effective. It is a quick and easy way to refer to alternative agencies and a useful tool to update those agencies on progress of a case. The system worked well without the need for extra phone calls or back-up information. The pilot was also helpful in identifying enhancements which we are discussing with the software developers.

Our next step is to look to extend use of Nellbooker to other agencies in the Carlisle area. Margie Cooper and Mandy Pflieger will start taking this forward in September.



We are delighted to announce that from 6th August the following supermarkets in Workington and Cockermouth will hold permanent collection points for the Foodbank.

**Asda**  
**Tesco**  
**Morrisons**  
**Co-op**

We are working in partnership with Allerdale Borough Council who are supporting us in this new venture; would like to thank Alan Smith and his team for their support.

We collect food from individuals who generously donate through churches, businesses, local community groups and schools. These new collection points will be another avenue for people to support the work of the Foodbank in this valuable way.

We very much appreciate all support given to us by individuals within Allerdale and Copeland; this support allows us to feed 240 people a month who are experiencing crisis.

# FOCUS ON



Best Life Independent Advocacy is a project run by People First. People First is an independent organisation. This means we are not run or controlled by any other service.

We work to provide adults in Cumbria with advocacy.

We work all over Cumbria and have Best Life Buildings in Barrow, Workington and Carlisle.

## **What is advocacy?**

Advocacy is taking action to help you to:

- Express your views and wishes;
- Secure your rights;
- Have your interests represented;
- Access information and services; and
- Explore choices and options.

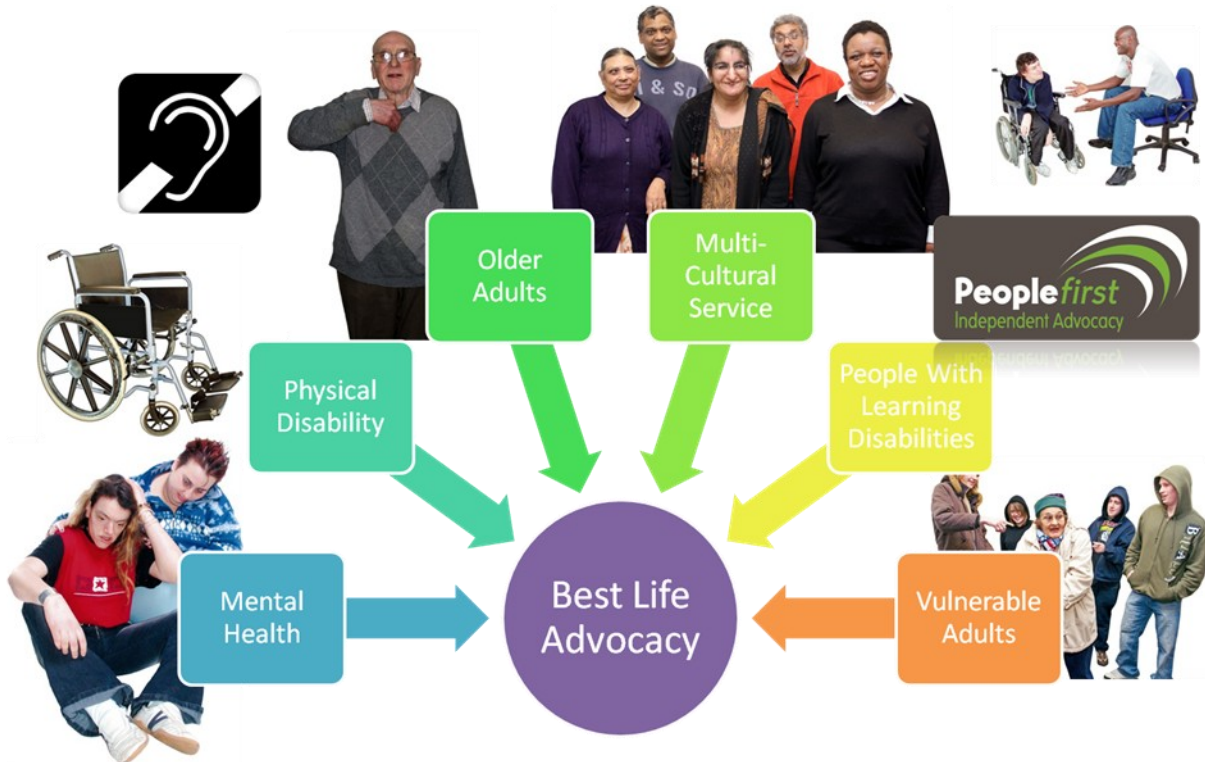
Advocacy promotes equality, social justice and social inclusion. It can empower you to speak up for yourself. Advocacy can help you become more aware of your own rights, to exercise those rights and be involved in and influence decisions that are being made about your future.

If you are unable to communicate your views in a way we can understand, we may still need to represent you. We will uphold your rights and ensure you are treated equally. This is called non-instructed advocacy.

## **Who can we help:**

Anyone who needs support to:

- Make changes and take control of your life;
- Be valued and included in your community; and
- Be listened to and understood.



**This is a free scheme**

**What is an advocate?**

An advocate is someone who supports you to have your views heard and make sure your rights are upheld.

Advocates can help you to put your views and feelings across when decisions are being made about your life.

Advocates can give support which will enable you to make choices and inform you of your rights.

An advocate will support you to speak up for yourself or, in some situations, will speak on your behalf.

Advocates are independent. They are not connected to the carers or to the services which provide your support.

An advocate works with you to develop your confidence wherever possible and will try to ensure that you feel as empowered as possible to take control of your own life.

# FOCUS ON



We have a new advocacy helpline providing information, signposting and low level support.

We will be operating surgeries and “drop ins” across the county on a regular basis as follows;

## Allerdale and Copeland

Workington Best Life Building	Tuesdays 10-12am
Maryport Library	Tuesdays 12-4.30 pm
Whitehaven	TBC

## Carlisle and Eden

Carlisle Best Life Building	Tuesdays 10-12am
Carlisle Library	Tuesdays 11-3pm
Eden Rural Foyer	Thursdays 10-4pm

## Barrow and South Lakes

Barrow Best Life Building	Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 10-4pm
Windermere Library	Mondays 10-4pm
Kendal	TBC

These times, days and venues may change over the coming months; if they do we will provide new information to everyone.

As previously, referrals from professionals will only be accepted via our electronic referral form available by accessing our website.

## How to contact us....

You can refer yourself using our phone line, or ask for some more information by calling us on:

**03003 038 037**

Lots more information is available online at:

[www.bestlife.org.uk](http://www.bestlife.org.uk)

You can email us at:

[bestlife@peoplefirstcumbria.co.uk](mailto:bestlife@peoplefirstcumbria.co.uk)

### **Workington**

The Best Life Building,  
4-6 Oxford Street, Workington,  
Cumbria CA14 2AH

### **Carlisle**

The Best Life Building,  
123-127 Botchergate,  
Carlisle, Cumbria CA1 1RZ

### **Barrow**

The Best Life Building,  
Unit 9, Furness House  
Barrow-in-Furness  
Cumbria LA14 1ZR



## Social Housing at the Crossroads

**In June, Mark Robinson, Director of The Housing Law Training Company Limited ran two excellent courses for us on Localism. As a follow up, Mark has kindly written the following article on the changes which could affect social housing tenants.**

CAN members who have clients in social housing – either from the Council or from a housing association – need to be alert to massive changes going on right now which may mean that clients are given tenancies which do not give them a stable home for life.

Until 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012, Councils and housing associations had to give social housing tenants a lifetime tenancy (although they were allowed the option of making the tenancy a probationary tenancy for a year or so before the tenant received full lifetime rights.)

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 underlying housing law and regulatory guidance has changed; people whose tenancies were in existence on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 will not be affected, unless they decide to move home, in which case they will need specialist advice before doing anything.

However it is possible for social landlords like Councils and housing associations to give new tenants a fixed term tenancy after 1<sup>st</sup> April, which in many cases will last 5 years, and which could be as little as 2 years long; at the end of the fixed term, landlords can seek possession of the property through the Courts and they will find it a lot easier to get the property back, even if the tenant has kept to their agreement. District Judges will not be able to suspend possession orders made against such fixed term tenants at the end of their fixed tenancies.

In order to be able to offer these new types of tenancy, social landlords will have to make formal decisions to do so and will have to have policies setting out

The types of tenancy they will use,  
The situations in which they will use them ,  
How long their fixed term tenancies will be, and  
In what circumstances they will renew a fixed term tenancy as it draws to an end.



Now is a time of decision for housing associations and councils; they stand at a crossroads- one way leads to a continuation of the current “lifetime tenancies for everyone” model, another way leads to limited length tenancies for some if not for all. Which way should they go?

This is a question which is currently pre-occupying every City, Borough and District Council in England, because they have until 15<sup>th</sup> January 2013 to produce a new strategic document – a Tenancy Strategy- which sets out the things that social landlords are to take into account when making these decisions and formulating the policies which have been highlighted above.

This legal duty, under s150 Localism Act 2011, applies to Councils whether they have a housing stock or not, and whilst the tenancy strategy cannot be imposed on an unwilling housing association by force, it is an important strategic document to which all social landlords must give proper regard, and which can provide a focus for debate and consensus.

Councils in Cumbria are currently drafting these Tenancy Strategy documents and it is vital that CAN members get involved in consultation and debate about which direction social housing should go in.

Fixed term tenancies sound attractive to some landlords because they are new and they appear to give a solution to problems like under-occupancy ( where for example, the tenant’s children have grown up and left home, leaving a single person in a three bedroom house.)

However it is likely that changes to benefits which are due to take effect in 2013 will put financial pressure on benefit claimants who are under-occupying social housing, which will induce them to want to move into a more suitably sized home without the landlord needing to have them on a less secure tenancy to do so.

Fixed term tenancies are potentially disastrous for a number of reasons, some of which are discussed below. Through Tenancy Strategies, we all have a chance now to get involved in a consultation process with Council officers and councillors, as well as housing associations, to try and persuade these key decision makers that, at the crossroads, they should make a firm choice to carry on down the road of lifetime tenancies.

Potential issues with fixed term tenancies include:

- They will make no immediate impact on the housing shortage because in most cases, landlords will not get possession back for 5 years;
- Homelessness will go up;
- There will be an increased staff and resources cost to landlords because, under fixed term tenancies, there will be rights of appeal and review firstly at the point of a person being offered the property, and secondly at the end of the tenancy, if the landlord has decided not to renew the tenancy. These reviews and appeals will tie up senior officers;
- There will also be additional expense and officer time involved in landlords deciding whether to renew or not, and landlords will be required to give reasonable advice and help (including advice about other housing options) to fixed term tenants whose tenancies are not going to be renewed;
- Tenants will have less incentive to invest financially and emotionally in a home and neighbourhood which they know they may be forced out of in 5 years' time; this may have knock on effects ranging from poor gardens and internal decorations, through to increased anti-social behaviour;
- In areas where some landlords are offering lifetime tenancies and others are offering 5 year fixed terms, the latter may seem less attractive and demand for that landlord's properties may be depressed, leading to increased voids and reduced rental income;
- There are also legal grey areas, arising from the way in which the new law has been written, and tenants may be able to rely on Human Rights Act and Equality Act defences to possession claims – which could be costly for the landlord and which could mean they lose the case;

As community-based advice providers we are in a good place to comment on issues like community sustainment and the effectiveness of housing management, so Councils should listen to our views when developing their Tenancy Strategies. However they won't have to listen to us if we keep quiet, thinking that someone else will speak for us! Time is also ticking, and by the end of 2012 many of these Strategies will be finalised and it will be too late for us to change them.

## What You Can Do Now

- Find out what your local Council is doing about its tenancy strategy – who is the lead officer, what are the timescales, what are the consultation opportunities?
- Think about current issues in your area like under-occupation, a shortage of social housing, community cohesion and property conditions, and ask yourselves how fixed-term tenancies would impact on those issues – then tell the Council what you think and why!
- Talk to other agencies, including health and education stakeholders.
- Using existing forums and working relationships – especially if you have strong links with elected members.

**Make sure your voices are heard!**



Cumbria Cerebral Palsy are running CP awareness training at £50 (2 hours) plus travel costs. The training includes:

- Cerebral Palsy as a condition – presentation, causes, associated difficulties
- Treatments and therapy options
- Social Model of Disability versus Medical Model
- Communication in CP

To find out more contact Kate Tebbett, CP Cumbria Support Work Team Leader on telephone number 015396 25565 or email Kate, [kate@cpcumbria.org.uk](mailto:kate@cpcumbria.org.uk)

## CAN TRAINING PROGRAMME

**Course Title: Welfare Reform**

**Trainer: Catherine Connors (CPAG)**

**Date: Wednesday 12 September 2012**

**Time: Morning session 9am-12.30pm, Afternoon session 1pm-4.30pm**

**Venue: Penrith Methodist Church**

**Places Available: 20 per session**

### **Course Content**

The Government's welfare reform programme is introducing major changes to the benefit and tax credit system. This half-day course for experienced advisers examines the changes and their effect on claimants.

Topics covered include:

- the transfer of claimants from incapacity benefits to employment and support allowance (ESA);
- 'time-limiting' entitlement to contributory ESA;
- the 'work programme', conditionality and sanctions;
- changes and cuts to tax credits, housing benefit and other benefits;
- changes to retirement pension and pension credit;
- abolition of the discretionary social fund and council tax benefit;
- replacement of disability living allowance by personal independence payment.

### **Suitable For:**

**Course Level Experienced** - experienced courses are for advisors who are confident that they have a good working knowledge of the benefits system.

This course is limited to **two places per organisation per session**.

## **CAN TRAINING PROGRAMME**

**Course Title: Adult Substance Misuse Training**

**Trainer: Anne Connolly, Training & Development Manager, CADAS**

**Dates & Venues:**

**Tuesday 6 November 2012 at CADAS, West Tower Street, Carlisle**

**Wednesday 14 November 2012 at The Oval, Salterbeck, Workington**

**Thursday 22 November 2012 at Barrow Fire Station's Training Room**

**Time: 10am-4pm**

**Places Available: 16 per session**

### **Course Content**

A training day that will provide a valuable resource for managers and front line staff who may come into contact with adults who misuse drugs and alcohol so that they can recognise and respond to individuals who are struggling and assist them in accessing support services.

By the end of this training participants would be able to:-

- Recognise the physical and psychological effects of commonly used drugs and alcohol.
- Identify signs and symptoms of drug and alcohol use.
- Establish and respond to immediate risk of danger to substance users.
- Identify common myths and stereotypes associated with substance use and recognise the impact these and personal attitudes can have when working with substance users.
- Outline a model to illustrate why people use substances and the nature of dependency
- Effectively raise the issue of substance use.
- Understand the process of change.
- Be aware of what services are available in Cumbria and how to refer on.
- Be familiar with information sharing and client confidentiality in relation to substance misuse.

**Suitable For: Frontline workers and managers**

## CAN TRAINING PROGRAMME

**Course Title: Right to Reside and Habitual Residence**

**Trainer: Rebecca Walker, CPAG**

**Date: Friday 28th September**

**Time: 10.00 - 4.00 (Registration 9.45) 5 CPD points**

**Venue: Penrith Methodist Church**

**Places Available: Only 3 places left**

### **Course Content:**

Those who advise European nationals about their entitlements to benefits and tax credits need to understand how the right to reside and habitual residence tests can be satisfied. This one-day course looks at the operation of these tests and focuses on the main groups that have a right to reside.

The course covers:

- which residence test applies for each benefit;
- the factors that are relevant in establishing habitual residence;
- the main residence rights for European nationals including as workers, self-employed, retaining those statuses, permanent residence rights and the rights of family members etc;
- significant caselaw developments.

**Suitable for:** CPAG Standard. Definition: For people with a working knowledge of the benefit and tax credit systems or the subject covered by the course. Suitable for people wanting a refresher or to update skills or information.

This course will be focusing on a particular condition of entitlement and so participants do need 'a working knowledge' of benefits .

## 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](mailto: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.

### Future courses and events

**Advice Week:** Building on the success of last year, we are taking a different approach this year. See overleaf to find out more.

Our **annual conference** will be held on Thursday 17th January 2013 and will have the theme Social Reform and Austerity

We are also looking at providing the following courses in 2012 - 2013

- Universal Credit
- Personal Independent Payment

Details will be published in our next newsletter and on our website when we have finalised the details.

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](mailto:maria.hewitt@hotmail.co.uk)

# Advice Week becomes Advice Shop

For the past two years Cumbria Advice Network have organised a series of networking lunches around the county as part of Advice Week. This year we felt it was time for a change and as a result we are working on developing Advice Shop Carlisle. The idea of Advice Shop is for organisations to come along and promote their service in a vacant shop in The Lanes as part of a drop in that will be open to the public. Organisations will have the opportunity to speak with those that stop by, book appointments and network with the other advice agencies that are present.

The fine details of Advice Shop are still being finalised, however what we can tell you is that:

There will be space for up to 20 stalls

It will be a day long event held in mid October on a weekday

Free publicity will be provided via CAN and Carlisle City Council

Advice Shop has the full support of Carlisle City Council

A similar style of Advice Week held in Blackpool reported over 300 clients accessing services as a result of their event with potential income gains of £20,000 for those clients.

We would like to start accepting expressions of interest from organisations that cover Carlisle or have a Countywide remit, and would like to be part of Advice Shop. We aim to roll this out throughout the County if this format proves to be a successful and useful day for CAN members.

To express an interest please contact Maria, [maria.hewitt@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:maria.hewitt@hotmail.co.uk)

We look forward to hearing from you!



## CAMPAIGNING FOR CHANGE

On pages 8 to 11, Mark Robinson outlined the changes that will affect tenants in social housing. As we all know, there are also significant changes to Welfare Reform and these will have an impact on our clients. We need to collect evidence so that we can have an influence. Our latest Campaigning for Change Bulletin is seeking evidence on the Impact of Welfare Reform on Disabled People, so please let us have any evidence.

**Martin Telford, CAN Project Manager, will be speaking at the Cumbria Financial Inclusion Forum and Cumbria Rural Forum Stakeholder Event in October on Welfare Reform from the Advice Sector's perspective. If you would like anything raised, please let us know.**

### Welfare Assistance Scheme

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 abolished some of the discretionary elements of the Department of Work and Pensions Social Fund—most notably Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants. These are emergency loans for people on benefits to buy one off items, such as cookers or fridges, or emergency grants to vulnerable individuals. These schemes will cease at the end of March 2013, and be replaced with welfare assistance schemes set up by top tier Local Authorities.

Cumbria County Council are seeking people's views on what sort of scheme we should set up for Cumbria.

On the Council website at <http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/welfareassistancescheme/default.asp> you will find

A short online questionnaire

Background summarising the government's policy

Background information on demand for

If you have any questions please contact: Joel Rasbash on 01228 226639

or email [joel.rasbash@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:joel.rasbash@cumbria.gov.uk)

## Keep in Touch

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

<b>Allerdale</b>	Maria Hewitt 01900 604735 maria.hewitt@hotmail.co.uk
<b>Barrow:</b>	Helen Robinson 01229 830367 rumelon1@yahoo.co.uk
<b>South Lakes:</b>	Helen Robinson 01229 830367 rumelon1@yahoo.co.uk
<b>Carlisle:</b>	Pete Moran 01228 515129 petemoran@comlaw.co.uk Margie Cooper 01228 633909 highrowresearch@aol.com
<b>Copeland:</b>	Maria Hewitt 01900 604735 maria.hewitt@hotmail.co.uk
<b>Eden:</b>	Margie Cooper 01768 891503 highrowresearch@aol.com
<b>County:</b>	Mandy Pflieger 01900 604735 mandypflieger@hotmail.com

**We say goodbye to Phil Carter who is moving to Amsterdam with his wife Sarah. Phil has made a fantastic contribution to the project, particularly with taking forward the Nellbooker pilot, so many thanks to Phil and good luck in Holland!**

**Champion Hours reduced to 3.5 per week (for each district they work in) from 19th May.**

**We will respond to your emails as quickly as possible and certainly within a week.**

**[www.cumbriaadvicenetwork.org.uk](http://www.cumbriaadvicenetwork.org.uk)**

**Together we ARE making a difference**