

# InSight



## WAKEFIELD DISTRICT CAB NEWS

[www.wakefielddistrictcab.co.uk](http://www.wakefielddistrictcab.co.uk)

issue 44

## WAKEFIELD DISTRICT COMMUNITY LEGAL ADVICE SERVICE

The draft CLAS specification has been issued for consultation. It can be accessed via the WMDC website and any comments should be made by 15<sup>th</sup> June.

WMDC and the Legal Services Commission are looking for the following services to be delivered through the CLAS:

1. Telephone & drop-in triage/information service
2. Generalist advice
3. Specialist advice including housing, debt, welfare benefits, employment, community care and family.

Services will be delivered through a combination of outreaches and permanent sites which should be open:

- 9-5 Mon-Fri
- 1 late evening or early morning
- Saturday morning once per month

A consultation event was held on 18<sup>th</sup> May at Agbrigg & Belle Vue Community Centre. Whilst a number of other organisations will be bidding, I have every confidence in the success of our planned joint bid with 'Yorkshire Law Firm of the Year', Switalskis Solicitors. We can offer so much 'added value' including our volunteers, social policy work, other funding, the national organisation, our information system and strong branding. Both organisations already have a long track record of service delivery in the district (in our case 70 years) and excellent local knowledge.

Unfortunately, funding is very tight with no increase on our current generalist budget for the next 3 years. In view of the massive increase in demand for our services and on top of the cut to our funding last year, this is a blow.

The tender process will be launched in early July and closes 24<sup>th</sup> September. If we are successful, the new service will commence 1 April 2010.

## PROJECTS & PARTNERSHIPS

### **CRT & Lloyds TSB**

We have received funding from the Coalfields Regeneration Trust to run a 1 year Income Maximisation project which will include benefits checks and back to work calculations. We will have advisors working from Pontefract, Castleford 5 Towns, Wakefield and Eastmoor St Swithuns. The project already has lots of referrals and is particularly welcomed by the Money Advice Unit whose caseworkers have signposted 44 clients for benefits advice in the first quarter of the year.

We have also received funding from Lloyds TSB for a 2 year period to contribute towards a welfare rights specialist caseworker so we will be able to maintain Carol's post. This is very welcome as Carol, working on this project for only 1 day per week during the past year, has so far seen 27 clients leading to a total benefit gained since 1 April 2008 of **£86,970.50**.

### **GP Pilot**

The pilots at Tieve Tara medical centre in Airedale (Tuesday) and The Grange medical centre in Hemsworth (Monday and Friday) are now running very well. Congratulations to Kardine and Anne and let's hope this means the project will be rolled out by the PCT next year.

### **External Events**

In March, Anne attended The Burberry factory in Castleford to offer advice and information to people who were being made redundant.

Jane Laving, one of our Wakefield volunteers, attended an information session at Newhall Prison, for women who would soon be leaving the prison.

### **The Springs housing outreach**

The sessions continue to run every two weeks at our Pontefract office offering four appointments per session. These sessions are always fully booked and Springs quite often add extra clients to the end of the session.

### **Kirklees Law Centre Employment outreach**

There is such a high demand for this service that the outreach now runs on a weekly basis. Steve Collins is also mentoring Jane, our own volunteer employment specialist (in the making!)

### **Switalkis welfare rights outreach**

Switalskis are now running a fortnightly outreach at the South Elmsall office dealing with clients who need specialist welfare rights advice, offering 5 appointments per session. The last 2 sessions have been fully booked.

## GENERALIST SERVICE

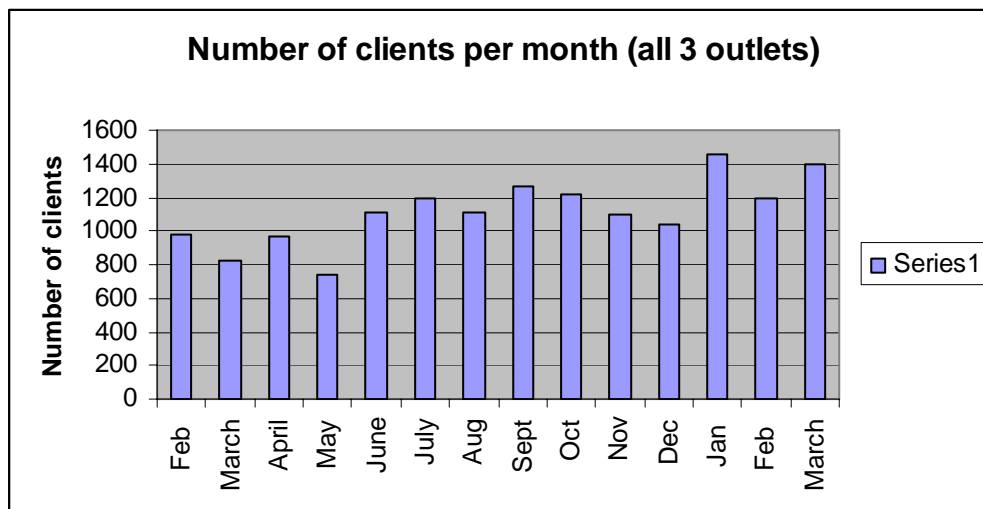
### Numbers of clients accessing the service in February 2009

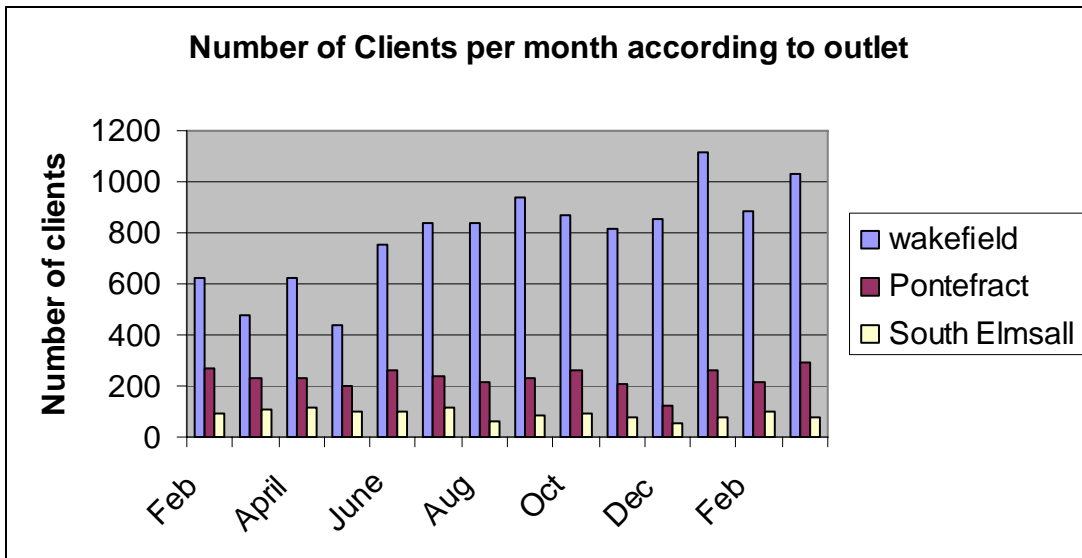
Client Advice Contact Type	
Assisted information	334
Advice	352
Advice line/Gateway	513
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1199</b>

### Numbers of Clients accessing the service in March 2009

Client Advice Contact Type	
Assisted information	397
Advice	417
Advice line/Gateway	580
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1394</b>

### Client contacts



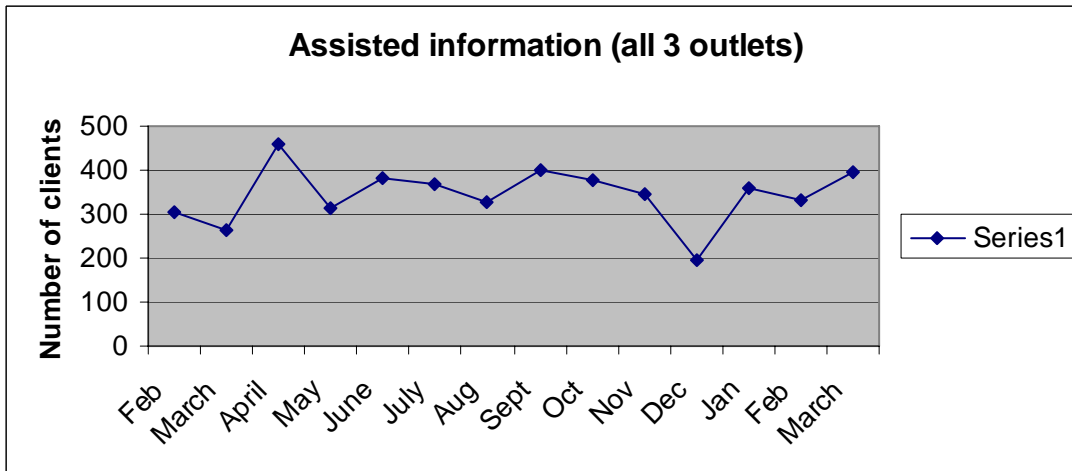


**The information centres are open as follows:-**

**Wakefield** - Monday, Wednesday & Thursday 10am

**Pontefract** – Monday, Wednesday & Friday 10am -1pm

**South Elmsall** - Tuesday & Thursdays 10am – 1pm



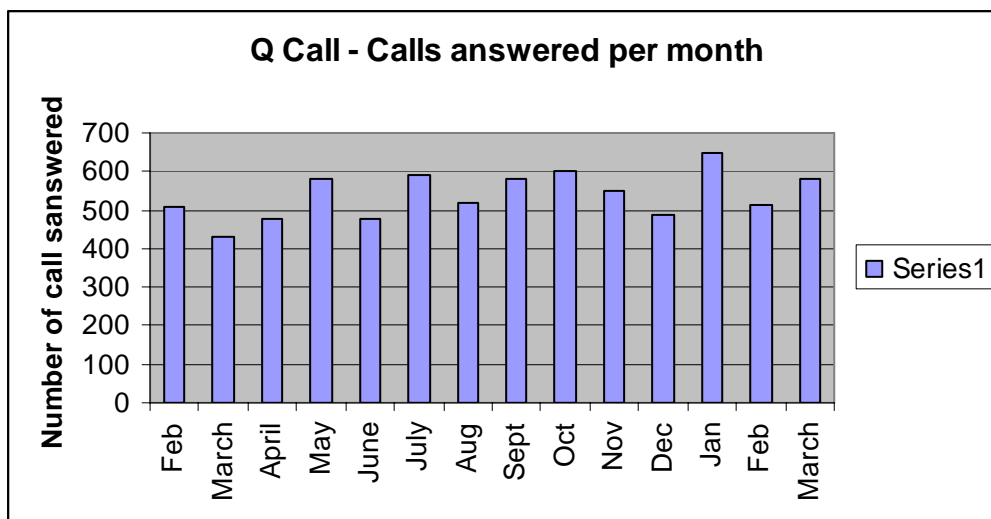
## Gateway Assessments

The telephone advice line is based in the Wakefield office and is now open Monday – Friday, 10am – 5pm.

Calls answered by an Advisor during **February** = 513

Calls answered by an Advisor during **March**= 580

**We are still receiving over 1,000 calls per week**



## MONEY ADVICE UNIT NEWS

- Demand for debt advice has increased considerably this year. The total debt that has been advised upon for the year 08/09 is £16,103,623.00; in comparison last year's figure was £10,449,928.00. We have seen 1537 clients for the year; thus average debt per client is £10,477.30. Our client count has increased from the last year figure of 99 to 128 clients on average each month. This equates to a 22.6% demand in our debt service.
- Debt Relief Orders (a new process by which clients with low level debts, no assets and low available income levels can deal with their debts) came into effect from April 2009. 5 of our Money Advice Unit staff are approved intermediaries (i.e. can undertake online applications). This along with the option of new mortgage assistance packages is making debt an evermore complex area of advice. More options to consider with clients mean interview times could become lengthier and mean more visits for follow up appointments. We will be monitoring this over the coming months.
- Our waiting list currently stands at 5 weeks. We have now recruited 2 new workers under our FIF project; Sarah & Wayne started with us in February as trainees (they were existing volunteers with the bureau). Both have made an excellent transition from general to casework and although still training are seeing clients. This should impact on waiting lists soon.

- Mandy has recently recruited the money advice team's first volunteer caseworker, Mike, who currently volunteers for 2 days at Pontefract. He is going to give a third day to the Money Advice Unit.
- Our new Legal Services Commission contract has been awarded. The number of clients we are able to assist under this contact during the current year will be 540. This represents a 50% increase.
- Our quarterly Financial Inclusion Fund report has recently been submitted; we recorded 246 clients against a target of 225. Of these 240 were new clients with only 6 returning clients.
- In the year ending 31 March 2009 we have received 73 direct referrals from Wakefield District Housing into the Money Advice Unit.

## VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

We have just experienced our most successful recruitment campaign yet. 105 prospective volunteers were invited to the 5 recruitment presentations Pete held during April. Around 30% of those invited came from prospective volunteers expressing interest via the Citizens Advice website. The rest were in response to the advert in the local paper.

40 prospective volunteers attended the presentations and 31 applied. 17 have been selected. 8 trainees for the adviser programme, 8 for the Information Assistant training and 1 admin support worker have recently commenced training. Pete comments:

***'Interestingly we have had a lot of interest from people who used to work in the banking sector wishing to change direction. They are attracted to the debt work. We also have a lot of interest from professionals who have recently been made redundant. An ability to pick the best applicants from such a large number of applicants is a good position to be in; the downside is that it isn't nice rejecting people who put themselves forward to volunteer for our organisation. The reality is though that CAB work, advice in particular is very challenging and its important we select people who are most likely to cope with the programme and the role.'***

Congratulations to Pete on his successful completion of the Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector. He has passed at the **highest level possible** for that course and it means that he has Associate Teacher status in the lifelong learning sector. Pete says:

‘Despite having a lot of training experience I have learnt much and our Trainees will certainly benefit from my studies, particularly in the way I give feedback and support learning as well as a PowerPoint presentation or two.’

*and finally.....*

Mandy & Sasha are now collecting sponsorship for Sasha's Skydive which takes place on 4<sup>th</sup> September to commemorate our 70<sup>th</sup> birthday.

The October 2009 AGM will be held during Advice Week on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> October. This will be a late morning event followed by lunch. The confirmed speaker is local writer and broadcaster, Ian Clayton and we are hoping that the Mayor will also be attending.

**Josie Hewitt has resigned from the Trustee Board due to increased family commitments. Huge thanks to Josie for all the time she has given us over the years both as a Trustee and as a member of the Staffing Task Group and countless interview panels.**

**We are looking to increase Trustee numbers and anyone interested in volunteering should contact Diane for further information.**

**This newsletter is produced by Wakefield District Citizens Advice Bureau. It comes out bi-monthly. Please tell us what you think of the newsletter and our service. All suggestions are welcome.**

**All comments to Liz Halliday, Chief Executive on 01924 378063 or email on [lizhalliday@wakefielddistrictcab.co.uk](mailto:lizhalliday@wakefielddistrictcab.co.uk)**