

InSight

citizens
advice
bureau

WAKEFIELD DISTRICT CAB NEWS

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issue 48

WAKEFIELD DISTRICT CLAS

Still no news on the tender documentation for the CLAS. If we have heard nothing by 1 April will be contacting Legal Aid Minister Lord Bach to voice our frustration that almost a year has now passed since the CLAS consultation event. It is now 3 years since planning for a community legal advice service for Wakefield began! If no tender documentation is forthcoming we need to negotiate our legal aid contract and our Wakefield MDC funding for 2010-11 urgently.

PREMISES

Wakefield MDC Property Services have increased the rent at the Pontefract bureau by £2,000 per annum, backdated to January 2008. We are still negotiating with them on the new lease for King Street. The main point of disagreement is around responsibility and payment for insurance, repairs, redecoration and legal costs. It seems likely that the annual rent bill for the 2 properties from April 2010 will be almost £40,000.

We are still hoping to make improvements to the old Age Concern rooms at King Street as detailed in the plans up in bureaux, subject to finding funds. Your comments and contributions are very welcome as this project is still in its draft stages.

Apologies for any disruption in Wakefield during the coming weeks. We are having cabling installed which will improve our IT performance and enable us to introduce a digital telephone system. We will also be making some improvements to the telephone gateway room including redecoration by probation services.

We have put together an IT shopping list from the Awards for All money and will be gradually acquiring new computers and monitors across the district.

Projects & Partnerships News 2010-11

Switalskis welfare rights outreach

The Switalskis' outreach moved to the Hemsworth Town Council building in January because of the closure of the South Elmsall bureau. The first outreaches there have been very successful.

Coalfields Regeneration Trust – extension

The CRT has agreed to offer further funding which will enable us to extend the project to run until 31st December 2010 (with the possibility of this being extended to 31st March 2011 depending on CRT underspend.) Carol and Ellen will continue to offer advice under this project at various locations across the district. The income maximization project has already exceeded its targets for the year and has been highly praised by the CRT board of trustees.

Additional hours of advice - extension

We have been successful in securing additional funding to extend this project. It will now run until the end of October 2010. Yim and Julie will continue to offer a telephone service every afternoon under this project.

Rural Outreach Project

Hot off the press....our bid for an outreach worker from the West Yorkshire Rural Access to Services Delegated Fund (Metro) has been successful. The outreach worker and a team of volunteers will focus on delivering advice services to rural residents in specific areas of Wakefield.

It is a requirement of the CLAS that much of our service will be delivered in this way and currently very few volunteers elect to work at outreaches. The paid worker will help to kick start this part of the service. The amount we were awarded was lower than the original request but will cover the start up costs and the cost of a 16 hour pw Advice Worker for 2 years. The aim is that volunteers will eventually take over the running of all the outreaches.

We will start recruiting a paid worker and volunteers to these roles soon with the aim of delivering services by early summer.

**CitA audit dates 2010 will be as follows:
Quality of Advice audit will be on 1-2 July
Organisational audit will be on 8-9 September**

Generalist Service

Generalist Outreaches

Normanton Town Hall - Monday 10am – 1pm

Featherstone Town Hall – Tuesday 10am -1pm

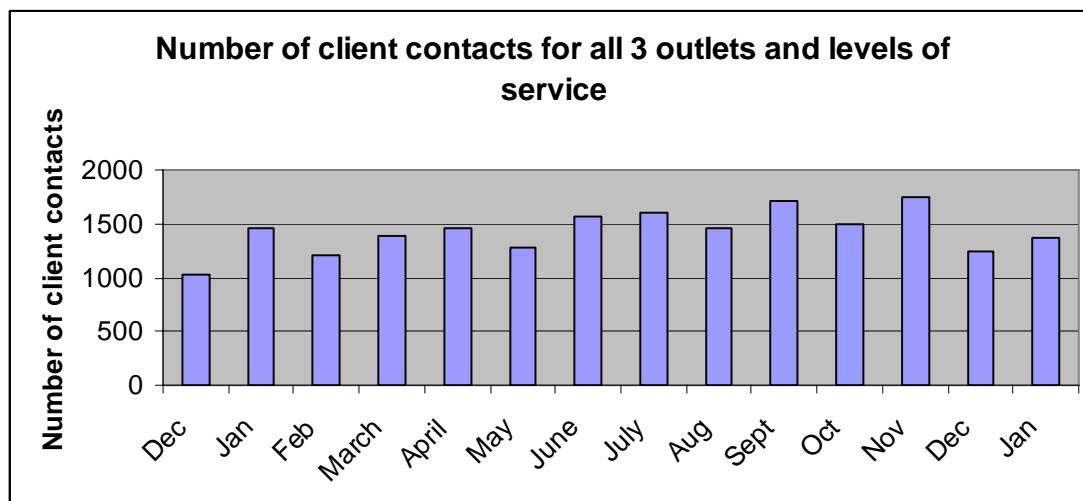
NEW From January 2010

Hemsworth Town council office 10am-1pm

COMING SOON....

South Elmsall outreach

Client contacts all three outlets December 2009 & January 2010



MONEY ADVICE UNIT

The waiting list for a debt appointment remains at 2 weeks.

External Referrals

Between 1st April – 18th February 2010 the following external referrals were made into the Money Advice Unit.

Wakefield District Housing	71
Open Door Project	8
CMHT (Ponte)	1
SMHT (Wfld)	1

English Church Housing	1
The Springs Housing Aid	14
Family Services	4
Direct Outreaches	1
Children's Centre	5
Web	8
Stoneham Housing	1

We find that a number of these organisations are able to offer debt advice to a certain level, which is fantastic, but still need to refer more complicated cases in to our money advice unit which has the only debt caseworkers in the district working to the specialist quality mark. This means that the clients we see tend to have extremely complex needs and can be very time consuming yet the amount of funding we receive per case remains at the same level. The Money Advice team also has the only approved Debt Relief Order Intermediaries in the district. DROs are an essential option for our clients but we receive no additional funding for carrying these out.

Congratulations to Hajra who has just announced that there will be another Money Advice Unit baby before the end of the year! We wish her and her husband the best of luck.

Changes to the service delivery

- Under the CLAS, all clients will have to receive a face to face or telephone Gateway (assessment) Interview. We will also be required to open every day in Wakefield. This is why we are busy recruiting volunteers for the 'Straight to Gateway' role (see below.) This could result in an increase in the need for full appointments and we would appreciate flexibility from full advisers if we need to move them off Gateway for a while so they can offer more appointments. Service Managers will monitor work flow and move advisers between Gateway and full interviews and between F2F and Telephone Gateways.
- Gateway Interviewers are also currently piloting scripts and guidance drawn up by Judith and Anne. CitA requires that we use start to use scripts but I must emphasise – they are meant to improve the service for clients and make life easier for Gateway Interviewers. If you have used them for a few weeks and have suggestions as to how they could be improved – please feed back to a Service Manager.

If you would like a chat about the new service and your role within in it, please talk to Judith, Anne or Liz. **Thanks to all volunteers for bearing with us during this time of change.**

Volunteer Training & Recruitment

The first group of 'Straight to Gateway' volunteers has completed the initial in bureau training and started doing supported telephone gateway assessments on the rota. This group consists of existing Information Assistants.

The second group of volunteers to start the 'Straight to Gateway' training are new volunteers to the service with the exception of 2 existing Information Assistants. They started on the 4th of March; another group of between 6-8 new volunteers will start training at the end of March.

As previously reported, all new volunteers (except for trustees and receptionists) will train initially to be a gateway assessor. At least half of every group will go on to train further to be a generalist adviser to ensure that sufficient new advisers are added regularly to the rota. The rest will continue as gateway assessors.

Recruitment campaigns have taken place over the last couple of months for the March gateway training programmes. The next recruitment campaign is due during April and May for June starts.

NVQs

Pete Hudson and Judith Farrell have completed the first part of the A1 NVQ assessor's award training. As previously reported, Wakefield District CAB (along with Leeds and Chapeltown CAB) is piloting the new NVQ in Legal Advice qualification. Initially we are concentrating on the Level 2 qualification which is roughly equivalent to the gateway role.

We have identified volunteers who are interested in gaining the NVQ and we will begin assessing them shortly.

Staff Rep

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN BECOMING THE STAFF REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE DISTRICT, PLEASE LET LIZ KNOW. At the AGM in October, the Chair will announce the person elected or nominated.

Paid staff should appoint (or elect in the case of more than one person putting themselves forward) one of their number to represent them at Trustee Board meetings. The Staff Rep may not be a Manager and should have worked for Wakefield District CAB for more than 6 months and for more than 6 hours per week.

The Staff Rep provides a link between paid staff and the Trustee Board. You will use your knowledge and experience to contribute to discussions. You bring the views of your peers to Trustee Board meetings and report back to your peers on issues raised at Trustee Board meetings. The current Staff Rep, Pete Hudson, will be able to discuss the role in more detail with you if you ask him.

The representative will attend Trustee Board meetings and has the right to speak but not vote.

You will be required to attend Trustee Board meetings which are held bi-monthly (January, March, May, July, September and November) on the 2nd Monday from 6.00pm until approximately 8.00pm. Staff who attend the meetings tend to start work at around noon on meeting days.

Other News

Liz and Sandra have started updating the business plan for 2010-2013 and a special edition of Insight will be distributed containing the amended objectives in draft form for consultation. The Trustees look forward to hearing your views.

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