



Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres

Annual Report 2014



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Front cover: Colin Hampton with Cllr Alexis Diouf, Cllr John Burrows and Lisa Haythorne at the official opening of the new offices on Rose Hill East.

Who are we?

Established in 1983, the Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres are part of a larger network of TUC Unemployed Workers' Centres. We aim to relieve poverty amongst unemployed people and those in receipt of benefits and credits as well as other disadvantaged people in Derbyshire.

What we Provide

The Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres have gained a fine reputation for the services we provide. Our work is recognised locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. We provide advice, support and representation for all who come to us for help. However, we don't just wait for people to come to us, we proactively make our services known to the hardest to reach and most vulnerable within our communities.

Each year we deal with over 9000 enquiries at our Centres and outreach venues. We have recovered over £3 million in lump sum payments and increased weekly benefits for the people of Derbyshire. This money is vital both for the recipients but also for the regeneration of the local

economy. Money gained is mostly spent locally helping to preserve jobs and aid local businesses.

Our services are provided by a few paid staff and a team of volunteers across Chesterfield, North East Derbyshire, Bolsover and Amber Valley. We have been successful in training volunteers from our communities many of whom move on into employment.

Again the Big Lottery Fund (Advice Services Fund) has been supporting us together with the Law centre and CABs to train volunteer caseworkers. Andrew Parkes has responsibility for volunteer training and the whole advice team provides mentoring and day to day support. Chesterfield Law Centre is providing a tailored training programme which gives our new volunteers, together with those from other organisations, an initial grounding in the necessary skills for a career as a caseworker in the area of Law they have chosen.

Volunteers

Volunteers Dorota Zabawa, Samantha McLean and Laura Marshall left us this year, finding paid work. Jim Miller (featured later in this report), one of our longest serving

volunteers has retired. Sally Greenhalgh has had to leave us for caring responsibilities. We wish them all well in their new ventures and endeavours.

New volunteers have joined our team. Dick Banker and Graham Armitage have brought their experience from backgrounds in the DWP and CAB respectively.

Andy Hardman has begun volunteering at Shirebrook and Shirley Pierson has returned after a break. Jeanette Woodhouse, John Knight, Nigel McIntyre and Paul Kent have been a great help at Chesterfield. Bridie Hudson (Chesterfield) and Charlotte Jerram (Alfreton) volunteered in between their studies and we again took a school student from Parkside.



The Chairman writes

Nothing is too good for the unemployed

So said Bas Barker, one of the founders of the Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres and veteran of the unemployed struggles of between the wars. After three decades located in inadequate Porta-kabins the DUWCs Chesterfield headquarters has finally acquired the premises that its volunteers, workers and service users deserve. Chesterfield Borough Council has made good on the promise of the leadership to provide better facilities and move the organisation away from the overcrowded conditions experienced on Saltergate.

The move to the lower ground floor of the town hall at No 1 Rose Hill East took place in April. DUWCs have joined the Derbyshire Law Centre, Trade Union Safety Team and Links CVS in a refurbished area that is totally separate from the Borough Council with its own entrance. The Derbyshire Law Centre provides the reception service. There is a large comfortable waiting area and six interview rooms.

One thing that hasn't changed is the welcome that people receive on entering the building. People, sometimes, feeling anxious, angry or vulnerable need to know they are in a supportive environment where they will receive a first class service. As Bas Barker said 'nothing should be too good for the unemployed'.

In introducing this Annual Report I ask you to consider the nature and intensity of the work carried out by our dedicated advice workers. The enormous amount of enquiries dealt with and tribunals represented constitute a lifeline to individuals and monies to the local economy and into the pockets of some of the most vulnerable in our community.



*Councillor Graham Baxter
MBE, Chairman of DUWCs
Management Committee*

The Co-ordinator writes

After 30 years working in Porta-kabins we are finally in bricks and mortar in Chesterfield!

I am still having to pinch myself every morning arriving at the new Centre to make sure I'm not imagining the move to habitable premises. There have been times when I have thought that this would never happen. We have had many false dawns where possible new premises have been within our grasp only for the arrangements to fail to materialise at the last minute.

Our thanks to all who have made this happen.

The new Centre is shared and the arrangements for our joint working are all going to plan. Facilities for those using our services are vastly improved and people do not seem to have had problems locating us.

Thanks to a volunteer Paul Kent a new database has been installed which will enable me to provide more and better evaluations of our advice work and Appeals. This year's statistics, generated under the old system, show a big increase in the number of decisions overturned both after

Mandatory Consideration and Tribunal. Staff and Volunteers have given a huge commitment to the organisation and the users of our advice services. We might not be reversing the welfare changes but our advisers have certainly changed people's lives.

Annual Reports can be stodgy and boring but I hope our case studies and activities bring the work of DUWC to life. Real issues affecting the real lives of people in our community.

Our services are available to all, so come and visit us, check your entitlements or show your support. I hope to see many of you in 2015.



Colin Hampton with Cllr Alexis Diouf, Cllr John Burrows and Lisa Haythorne at the official opening of the new offices on Rose Hill East.



Your Voice Your Rights!

Fit for Work or Survival of the Fittest

Back in March DUWCs hosted a conference, supported by the TUC, which engaged with those affected by the Work Capability Assessment process of Employment and Support Allowance.

The conference attracted an interesting line-up of contributors including Kate Green MP (Shadow Minister of State for Work and Pensions), Sue Marsh (Diary of a Benefit Scrounger), Debbie Jolly (Disabled People Against the Cuts), and Richard Exell (TUC policy officer).

However the highlight of the day was the interactive performance given by the Dead Ernest Theatre Group from Sheffield.

Having previously interviewed a couple of people who had gone through the process, they re-enacted the experience of a woman in a wheelchair's visit to the Medical Assessment Centre in Chesterfield. Her story from the original correspondence and phone call through to her

finding the Centre not accessible for wheelchair users plus the conduct of her assessment, enlivened the audience. People watching the performance were then asked to intervene in a second re-enactment. Their

interventions were aimed at where the process fails people with disabilities and health conditions in terms of how they are treated and the inadequacy of the Assessment.

Of course many of us would like to see an end to the WCA and this point was well made by a number of contributors.

Following workshops involving over 65 people questions were put to the panel of experts particularly focusing on the future conduct of Government in this sphere. The Shadow Minister said she would take on board many of the points raised regarding the WCA in framing future policy.



Kate Green MP answers questions at the conference

Your Voice Your Rights!

Max your money

With the support of North East Derbyshire District Council, the Centres embarked on a series of take-up campaigns throughout N.E.Derbyshire during the year. The focus was on North Wingfield, Grassmoor, Eckington, Clay Cross, Holmewood and the villages of Stonebroom, Shirland and Mickley.

The benefits and tax credits MAX YOUR MONEY CAMPAIGNS aim to maximise people's entitlements. Often people do not realise that they are missing out on extra help usually because of the complexity of the system or fear of the form filling and bureaucracy. Our advisers help with both. The campaigns were very successful.

The following numbers were helped as a result of our publicity and engagement:

North Wingfield	41
Grassmoor	30

Eckington	41
Holmewood	31
Clay Cross	38
Stonebroom, Shirland, Mickley	34

The max your money campaigns move on to Chesterfield for the present and it is hoped to secure funding to target areas in Bolsover and Amber Valley in the coming year.



Your Voice Your Rights!

Benefit Sanctions

Many people have come to our Centres this year facing benefit sanctions with regards to Jobseekers Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance. However many more are reluctantly accepting a sanction as they are unaware that they can challenge the decision. The DWP are often found to be not following their own procedures with claimants not receiving the correct paperwork and the decision not put in writing with no explanation of the reason for the sanction.

Unfortunately, if a person does not challenge the first sanction any subsequent sanction will be of a longer duration. Many sanctions are being implemented outside existing procedures and regulations but unfortunately they are aware that many will not challenge so are getting away with it.

There is a huge fear factor locally with people feeling intimidated and confused by the unreasonable treatment by an organisation that is supposed to be helping them

and possibly driving them further from the labour market.

The DUWC will continue to advise and represent those affected and we will continue to promote our services so that unemployed people are aware of their rights and access to help.



Official opening of Chesterfield Food Bank

Unfortunately statistics from the Chesterfield food bank point to sanctions as one of the main reasons people need to utilise their service. Case studies in this Annual Report show the extreme nature of the problems caused by the withdrawal of the safety net in the benefits system.

Your Voice Your Rights

Snakes in Slovakia

Our Snakes and Ladders 'Climbing out of Poverty' Game and Exhibition has gone global. DUWCs were contacted earlier this year by a Slovakian community organization that had seen our initiative on the internet. We have a website (developed By North East Derbyshire CAB) www.climbingoutofpoverty.co.uk and videos on youtube.



The Slovakian organisation asked if they could have permission to make a version of the game relevant to local conditions. We, of course were happy to agree and helped them with dimensions, materials and portability.

Dusana Raslavska of ETP Slovakia says

'We used Climbing out of Poverty game during Pohoda festival, the biggest summer festival in Slovakia. The game attracted the visitors of NGO sector, as well as the children who played it with their parents. It was very nice observing as they were explaining the issues in simple terms to the children while having fun climbing the ladders and sliding down the snakes. A month later, we were planning to use the game at another festival that was to take place in the segregated Roma settlement. Our idea was to bring popular artists to the place rarely visited by mainstream public to support the idea of tolerance, community building and integration. Unfortunately, the city banned the festival citing safety concerns as the reason. We will try our best to succeed next year and will definitely use the game.'



Your Voice Your Rights!

We have decided to include the game in the training activities for new employees of our community centres. Also, I am currently working on developing a volunteer programme, in which I would like to include workshops at schools. Planning the activities, I see the game as an excellent tool to introduce the issue of poverty and break stereotypes among students.'

Unfortunately we could not be invited over for the launch!

Our version has been out and about the area throughout the year thanks to Shay Boyle and Dennis Clayton.

The Snakes and Ladders game aims to show the difficulties people face in climbing out of poverty to achieve a full-time job with good pay and job satisfaction. The squares include ladders indicating the many things that can help this process but also the Snakes, which are greater in number.

The Snakes show the many pitfalls that face anyone trying to lift themselves out of their situation. Too many people who arrive through the doors of the DUWCs have found a slippery snake put there by those who are supposed to be helping them.



Your Voice Your Rights!

Pennies and Pounds

Last year we launched the innovative Pennies and Pounds Project alongside our partners Derbyshire Law Centre, Chesterfield and NED CABS, Age Concern Chesterfield, and the Chesterfield Credit Union. The project is funded by the Comic Relief - Managing your Money Better Programme.

We aim to actively promote money advice services to older people through outreach sessions at the Royal Hospital and talks to community and faith groups.

Since April the partnership has succeeded in training a further 8 volunteers and given over 2000 older people an initial diagnostic assessment. 553 people received advice across the Agencies leading to a total of £187,742 in debt rescheduled and £447,939 recovered in annualised income through benefits and tax credits gained.

The project was shortlisted for an award 'project of the year' at this years Voluntary sector Awards organised by the Volunteer Centre



Farewell

This year saw the retirement of one of our longest serving volunteers, Jim Miller.

Jim had trained as a benefits and Tax credits adviser under Bob Pemberton at the turn of the century following Jim's retirement from paid work. Jim gave consistent commitment to the organisation and is passionate about helping the people of Derbyshire to be able to find their way through the difficulty of claiming entitlements and challenging the decisions made by the Department for Work and Pensions.

Jim has the respect of staff and volunteers past and present and all were sad to see him retire.

Jim's experience and commitment is difficult to replace. However, the show must go on, and we look forward to training and developing the volunteers of the future though our lottery funded project.

Jim Miller with Colin Hampton and Lynn Bagshaw after successful campaign to stop the DWP making money out of callers ringing to sign on.



Our Funders 2014

- Chesterfield Borough Council
- North East Derbyshire District Council
- Bolsover District Council
- Derbyshire County Council
- Eckington Parish Council
- Grassmoor Parish Council
- Hucknall Parish Council
- North Wingfield Parish Council
- Pinxton Parish Council

Parish and Town Councils:

- Alfreton Town Council
- Brimington Parish Council
- Clay Cross Parish Council
- Clowne Parish Council
- Pleasley Parish Council
- Somercotes Parish Council
- Unstone Parish Council
- Warsop Parish Council

Grants and Donations

- Comic Relief
- Big Lottery
- Working Neighbourhood Fund (Chesterfield)

Small Grants and Donations

- Anonymous Charitable Trusts
- Graysons Solicitors



Statistics

Type of Appeal Oct 1st - Sept 30th	2013 Completed	2014 Completed
Incapacity Benefit & Employment Support Allowance	479	585
Disability Allowance & Attendance Allowance/PIP	121	98
Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (see note 1)	6	10
Job seeker's Allowance	10	22
Income Support (sickness related & overpayments)	4	7
Tax Credits	1	4
Housing Benefit & Council Tax Benefit	1	3
Other	2	4
TOTAL	624	733

Note 1: Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit covers payments on a weekly basis for accidents at work and diseases contracted as part of work. These include bronchitis and emphysema for miners, vibration white finger, deafness, carpal tunnel syndrome, pneumoconiosis and many asbestos related diseases.

As a result of these tribunals the following amounts were awarded:

Lump Sum Arrears: £861,300

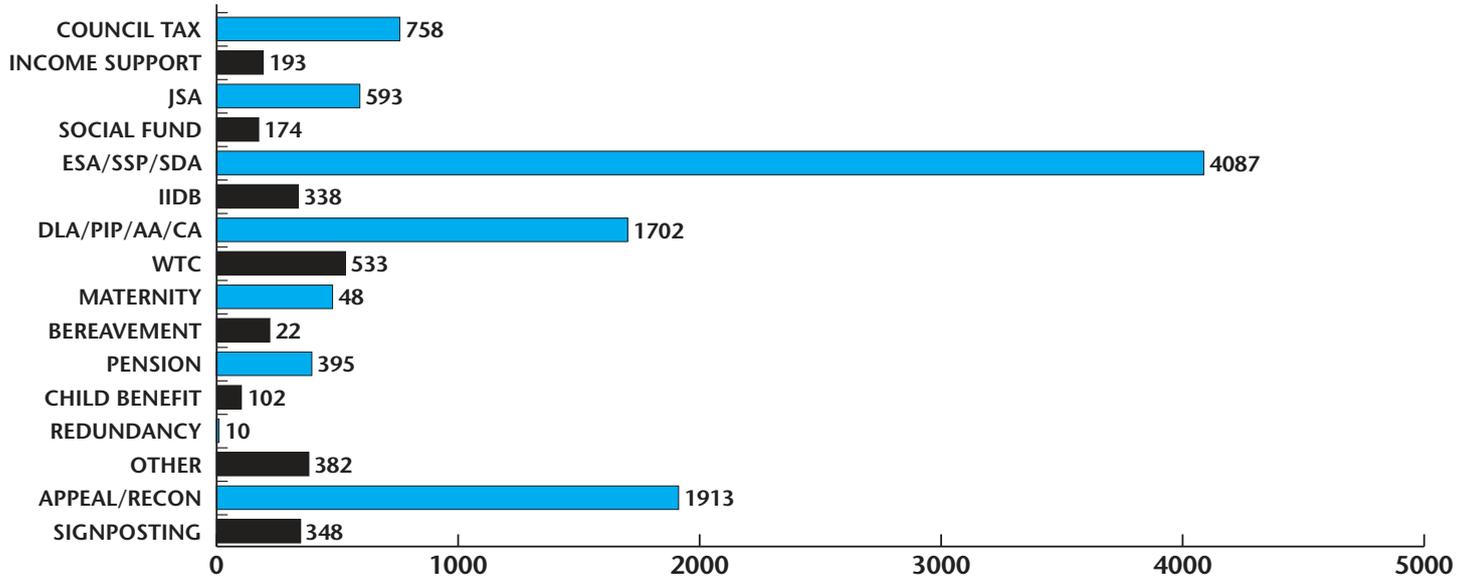
Ongoing Weekly Benefits p.a.: £1,217,892

Over a year general enquiries at the Centres and Outreach Offices (as well as by home visits) resulted in payments amounting to £1,170,450 for Derbyshire residents.

During the last year this has meant a total of **£3,249,642** has been won through our advice and representation and at appeals.

Statistics

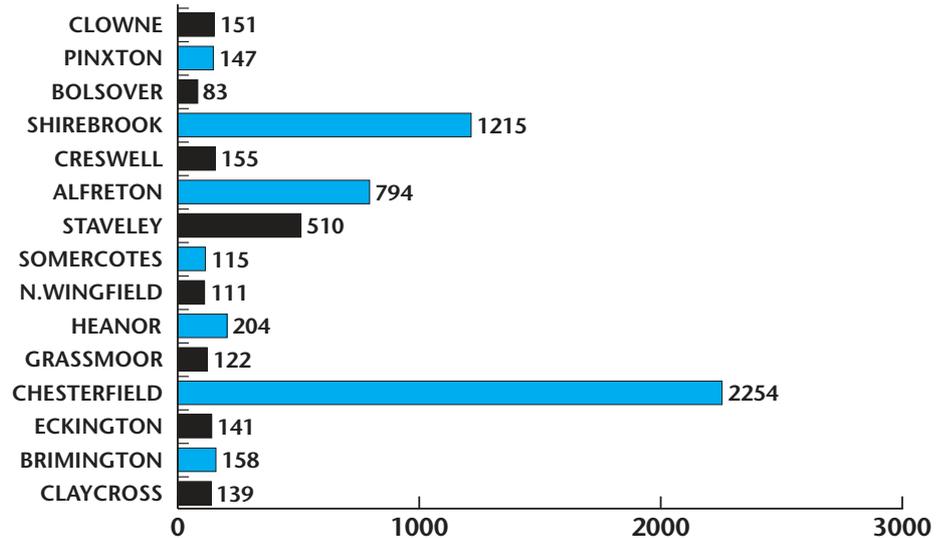
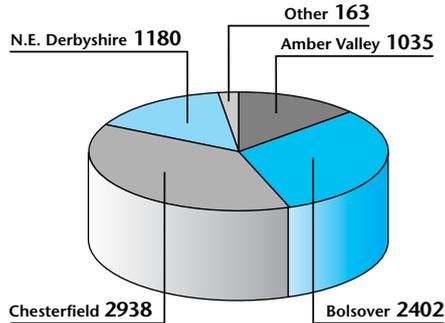
ENQUIRY TOTALS 2013/2014



Statistics

ORIGIN OF ENQUIRIES

VENUE CALLER TOTALS 2013/2014



Home Visits 35

Telephone Enquiries 1120

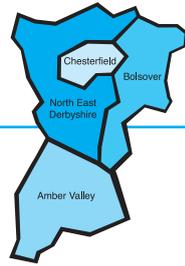
Around the area - Chesterfield



As well as new premises in Chesterfield we have also relocated in Staveley. Following our ten years at the Learning Matters Centre on High Street we took our service to Staveley Hall. However, due to renovations at the Hall we have had to move again.

Since September we have been operating from the Staveley Library on Hall Road. The staff have been very welcoming and we have leafleted extensively to alert people to the change of venue. Brimington Parish Council continues to support the DUWCs providing premises at the Community Centre. The Monday morning sessions are well used and provide a convenient access for our benefits and tax credits advice.

The impact of Welfare Reform has been felt deeply throughout the County and Chesterfield has thrown up some particularly depressing case studies around the issue of benefit sanctions and administrative failures at the Department for Work and Pensions.



Our proactive Max your Money campaign moves on from N.E.Derbyshire to Chesterfield this year with Staveley/Middlecroft, Boythorpe, Loundsley Green/Holmehall, Old and New Whittington plus St Helens being targeted.

Many thanks go to our volunteers Bridie Hudson, Jeanette Woodhouse, Graham Armitage, Dick Banker, Esther Fisher, and Keith O'Neill for helping during the year.

Case Study

Stephen Lynam (53) suffered from anxiety and depression as well as high blood pressure, a heart condition and musculo-skeletal problems.

He was found fit for work following the work capability assessment process. Stephen challenged the decision. Since October of last year the challenge goes to a Mandatory Reconsideration where the Department looks at the case again before he can make an appeal. This change was introduced to try



Around the area - Chesterfield

to cut down the number of tribunals. However, whilst waiting for a Mandatory Reconsideration, the claimant receives nothing if he or she feels unable to sign on jobseekers. Stephen felt he was in no condition to look for work and would soon fall foul of the regulations that go along with the claiming of Jobseekers Allowance. The DWP lost his paperwork and nothing came of repeated phone calls and letters. Finally after 22 weeks and the intervention of the local advice centre he received the news that his Mandatory Reconsideration had been turned down. Stephen had lived on two small payments from the local discretionary fund and visits to food banks but was not eating well. He was facing eviction and became ever more depressed. He died shortly after receiving the news that he would be allowed to appeal the Department's decision.

His sister, Mavis Bond, was shocked at the treatment of her brother.

'I find it hard to believe in this day and age that the State would leave a man penniless - but this is 21st-century Britain where a sick man can be hounded to death and denied a safety net.'

Stephen's appeal was heard posthumously and the tribunal overturned the Department's decision. Subsequently the Department is pursuing his sister Mavis for the grant she received to bury him. His estate was boosted by the posthumous award made because of the DWP's wrong decision. This money, which might have kept him alive, is now being used to deny his sister the means to pay for his funeral. Not content with hounding him while he lived the cruel system continues to bring misery to his relatives. Mavis is herself in poor health and has just undergone heart surgery. She has taken the matter to Chesterfield's MP Toby Perkins who has written to Minister Ian Duncan Smith.

"Thank you so much for all your help. My application for ESA was successful and I feel I couldn't have done it without your help and advice." P.N Brimington



Around the area - Chesterfield

Case Study

A Brimington woman, who originates from Poland was made redundant after working for three years full time in a factory assembling components.

She had never had a day off work in this time and received a glowing reference from her employer. Before signing on she registered for Pitmans training courses in IT and undertook voluntary work as a teaching assistant (to gain experience for a possible move into this area of employment) and she also started voluntary work in an advice organisation using her language and interpreting skills. Within a month of signing on she had her JSA sanctioned for four weeks for not doing enough to find work! She had done as she was told but the explanation of her responsibilities was confused and the paperwork did not properly outline the number of steps she was supposed to take. We helped her with a mandatory reconsideration (the step now required

before an appeal can be lodged) and took the case to Chesterfield's MP. The explanation for the sanction from the Jobcentre given to the MP's office was different to the one she had been told, was different again in writing in reply to the mandatory reconsideration and changed once more in a subsequent meeting with the jobcentre manager. The effect of the sanction on the woman from Brimington was to demoralise her not bring her closer to the Labour Market. Following the MP's office intervention the sanction was lifted. The continuing problem with the bullying and discriminatory use of sanctions at the jobcentre is still to be properly addressed.

"Thank you for your advice, support and help, thank you for being here for people who are in a quandary where to get advice and help concerning benefits in this difficult time. All the best for the future."

J.B Staveley



Around the area - Bolsover



It's been another year of hard graft for the staff and volunteers, delivering benefits advice within the Bolsover district.

From our main centre in Shirebrook and to Creswell, Carr Vale, Pinxton and Clowne, large numbers of residents continue to seek our advice on a wide range of benefit issues.

Many thanks once again to our volunteers Keith O'Neill, Alison Jarvis, Gill King, Shirley Pierson, Andy Hardman and Karen Seymour, who continue to give the centres their free time, and provide a level of expertise and support which is without doubt the reason we are able to continue to provide a quality service in these difficult times.

The Welfare Reform screw continues to tighten with continuing difficulties for claimants around our area. The 'Bedroom Tax' with its punitive reduction in Housing Benefit; DWP administrative chaos leaving claimants without benefits for long periods; the introduction of Personal Independence Payment to replace Disability Living

Allowance, with decisions for some claimants taking at least 18 months and JSA claimants subjected to 'claimant commitment' rules which should only be applied once Universal Credit is fully rolled out in our local communities.



Andy Parkes, adviser

We have an increase in sanction activity throughout the Bolsover District as well as nationwide. The difficulty for local advisers has been to try and counteract the DWP's attempts to convince claimants that it is futile to challenge sanction decisions. This state of affairs has led to the absence of

formal written sanction decision which clearly explain a claimants appeal rights, replaced by verbal notifications from

Job-centre Advisers; many claimants are receiving multiple sanctions which create long standing hardship.

At our Shirebrook office we have beefed up our response to the increase in sanction activity, by targeting both ESA and JSA claimants, with an eye catching window display encouraging those facing sanctions to come along and seek advice about challenging decisions.

The government's response to the rise in appeals was to introduce a two stage appeal process, whereby claimants who have received an unfavourable benefit decision, now have to firstly request a Mandatory Reconsideration. If the decision remains unchanged then claimants have the right to appeal directly to HM Courts. There is a sting in the tail from the new appeal arrangements for ESA claimants, failing Work Capability Assessments. During the reconsideration period ESA is no longer payable, leaving many local residents with the nightmare scenario of having to consider claiming JSA and so reluctantly declaring some ability to seek employment, or forced to seek financial support from, family, friends or local welfare assistance schemes.

“Just a small note to say thank you for your time in fighting my case, without you all I would have not been able to have gone through with it. But we won!”

J.S Shirebrook



Around the area - Bolsover

Case Study DLA/PIP 'mash up'

A Shirebrook woman claiming Disability Living Allowance received a renewal claim form in January 2014.

We helped her complete the form and in February 2014 she received a letter from the DLA Unit stating that her claim was being treated as a new Personal Independence Payment claim. She waited in vain for the PIP questionnaire to be sent out and in April 2014 her provisional DLA awarded ended. We requested that her DLA payments be extended (as directed in legislation) but without success. A little later the woman was informed that she should not have been invited to claim PIP; her claim would be again treated as a DLA renewal. In May 2014 the woman was informed that her DLA claim was with a Decision Maker as an urgent case for determination.

Time went by without any communication from the DWP, or payments of DLA. Numerous phone calls with differing reasons why the claim had not been decided. Finally we contacted the woman's local MP, who made representations to the hierarchy within the DWP. In August 2014, after months of stress and financial hardship, she received a written apology from a senior DWP official. Her DLA payments would be backdated to April 2014 and extended to at least October 2015. Her claim again would now be treated as a new PIP claim; she was sent a PIP2 questionnaire, which we helped her complete.

As we go to press the woman is waiting for a PIP assessment. We have requested a special compensatory payment for departmental maladministration, causing unnecessary stress on the woman and her family.

Around the area - North East Derbyshire



DUWC operate from outreach sessions in Derbyshire District, Eckington, Clay Cross, Grassmoor and North Wingfield. People also access our services at Chesterfield, Staveley and Alfreton. North East Derbyshire has been very much in focus with the Max your Money campaign generating many enquiries and over 100 Appeals

Tribunals. Much needed support has come from the Parish Councils at Clay Cross, Eckington, Unstone, Grassmoor and North Wingfield.

The Max your money Campaign has an effect long after the event week itself, raising the profile of the Advice sessions and location of local provision.

It is a shame that we do not have the resources to have a presence in every village in North East Derbyshire as our

records show that those that access the services in numbers reflect the closeness of the provision.

Although we are able to do home visits where necessary it is obvious that many people are still missing out on our services. Ease of access particularly for those with health problems seems to be the overriding reason.

Case study

Late last year we reported on the case raised at Prime Minister's Questions by Dennis Skinner MP regarding David Coupe of Calow.

David died in poverty whilst awaiting his Employment and Support Allowance tribunal having been found fit for work. David had developed cancer. Dennis Skinner called for the sacking of ATOS, the firm surrounded by controversy, who had carried out a Work Capability Assessment on David. Atos have



Around the area - North East Derbyshire

subsequently pulled out of their contract with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Mr Skinner also called for his widow to be compensated. This has not happened and, worse still, despite a posthumous hearing of his case reversing the decision, his widow Lyn has not yet received the payment to which she was entitled.

The case was heard in January. Since then she has passed from one section to another at the DWP and her letters and calls ignored. Lyn is taking the case up with Dennis Skinner MP and says "This is adding insult to injury. People should not have to appeal to their MP to get justice. People like me are being treated with utter contempt." **Stop Press:** Following an intervention by Mr Skinner Lyn has now received her payment but still no compensation.

"I would just like to say thank you for all that you have done for me. Without your help I would not have gone through the appeal on my own. I am very grateful."

R.M N.Wingfield

Case Study

A 63 year old man came along to our 'Take up' campaign in the Mickley Community Centre.

He came in with his sister who insisted on him accompanying her for a 'benefits check'. He was reluctant and said from the outset that he would not be entitled to any additional money. He was in receipt of Guaranteed Pension Credit, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support. He had some health problems so we began assessing him for a possible claim for Personal Independence Payment (the new replacement for Disability Living Allowance). It was clear that he did not qualify for disability benefit; he had no disabilities or conditions relating to work (never worked in mining).

He stated during our interview that he was paying some Council Tax, and had been since April 2013, and possibly before. We were puzzled by this because of his age and the fact he was claiming Pension Credit; he should have been exempt from paying any

Around the area - North East Derbyshire

Council Tax. We rang North East Derbyshire District Council and made contact with an Officer from the Benefits Section. We were told that the man was on record as receiving Income Support and should be paying a small amount of Council Tax like other benefit claimants at working age. We pointed out that the man was in fact 63 and in receipt of Pension Credit so should be exempt.

The officer agreed and stated that the man's records appear to have not been updated and he should not have been paying any Council Tax from April 2013, or even before. He was advised to provide proof of his Pension Credit entitlement to the Local Authority and his records would be updated with a potential sum of money coming his way. The man could not believe it and was very grateful for our help; leaving with a smile on his face. On the way out we could hear his sister telling him she knows best. She pointed out to him that

he would have continued to pay Council Tax if he had not agreed to come along to one of our sessions. The value of such campaigns is quite clear.

Mr. T from Grassmoor had made a claim for DLA because his leg had been amputated.

The DWP decided he was not entitled to either the mobility or care element. We appealed that decision and represented him at a Tribunal. We requested the claimant should be entitled to high mobility and low rate care regarding the cooking test. The Tribunal agreed and he was awarded the benefit due to being unable or virtually unable to walk plus low rate care because he could not cook or prepare a main meal for himself. He received £4270 DLA arrears plus £76.25pw

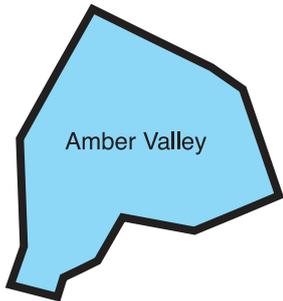
Thank you so much for all your help and support which helped me win my appeal.

You are doing a fantastic job for us all.

T.C Grassmoor



Around the area - Amber Valley



Great support from Alfreton Town Council, Somercotes Parish Council and Heanor Salcare have again made the difference in allowing our provision to spread to Amber Valley.

In many cases we are the only face to face, drop-in benefits and tax credit advice service in the Borough and this is reflected in the take up of help and representation.

It is hoped that we will be able to expand our services in the coming year and focus our Max your Money campaign in Heanor and Alfreton.

Without support from the Borough Council it has always been difficult to provide advice for Amber Valley residents. We have only been able to continue for the last ten years or more year due to the fantastic support of the Town and Parish Councils plus superb support from Salcare. We will do everything in our power to maintain and expand our provision.

Case Study

Mrs B from Heanor was in receipt of Income Support and Carers Allowance.

She worked p/t but earned under the £100 threshold. She received a letter informing her that she had an overpayment of £850 We put in an appeal on her behalf stating that in our opinion they had got their figures wrong. We received no further correspondence regarding this until we were informed of a date for the appeal hearing. We represented her and informed the Tribunal Judge that the evidence was contradictory on several issues. She agreed and requested that the DWP send a Presenting Officer to clarify things. When we went to the next hearing the Presenting Officer was unable to offer an explanation as to the overpayment. The Judge was not very happy and reminded the Presenting Officer that this case had cost time and money and it should not have been brought in the first place. She ordered that the DWP must come up

Around the area - Amber Valley

with a satisfactory explanation within 28 days. Mrs B soon received an apology and a decision stating there was no overpayment.

Mr M from Ripley scored 12 points when he attended a work capability assessment.

This meant he was unable to claim ESA and was told his money would stop and he should sign on for JSA. He tried to sign on but was told he was too ill to claim JSA. He suffers with severe depression/anxiety. This left him confused and without any money. Under the new system we had to request a Mandatory Reconsideration which meant he would receive no money until his request had been looked at by a decision maker. He received no money for 11 weeks except for 3 Derbyshire Discretionary Fund payments. We had to refer him to his local food bank on a weekly basis. In the meantime we made a new claim for PIP. He

eventually went for a medical and has been awarded mobility at the standard rate and the standard rate of care. Following this we sent for a claim pack for his wife and she now receives Carers Allowance. We have also made him a claim for Pension Credit due to his age and payments will start 6-1-15. Regarding his ESA appeal we represented him and he was placed in the Support Group.

PIP £76 weekly payments - money owed £1824

CA carer premium £34.20 weekly

ESA £171.80 weekly with Support Group component - money owed £1287

“We would just like to say a huge thank you to all staff. We couldn't have done it without you. You all do a fantastic job.”

Mr and Mrs. M Alfreton



User Feedback Survey 2014

109 people responded to our user feedback survey in September.

Here are a selection of comments given

Below shows how people found out about our services.

From a relative or friend	58
Had accessed service before	18
Referred by organisation or support worker	9
Saw Leaflet	8
Saw sign outside	3
Referred by CAB	3
Referred by Law Centre	2
Referred by Jobcentre Plus	2
Referred by MP	2
Saw piece in Derbyshire Times	1
No response	3

Satisfaction Rates with the Service were as follows.

Very Happy	100
Satisfied	8
No Response	1

Don't know what I would have done without this service.

Great help and advice. Great knowledge and insight to people's problems. I don't know what I'd do without this place.

Very helpful.

Very happy with service, very satisfied when been here.

User Feedback Survey 2014

A much needed service.

I had to wait a long time because it was busy but well worth the wait.

Brilliant, always solve issues and concerns.

Very friendly, helpful and understanding.

Very happy with service, very satisfied when been here.

Best information you could want.

They do a fantastic job and are always there for you.

Excellent service, may it continue.



WHERE TO GET ADVICE

Chesterfield & North East Derbyshire

1 Rose Hill East, Chesterfield S40 1NU
Tel 01246 231441/Fax 01246 551529
Email: info@duwc.org.uk
Monday - Friday 9.30am - 1.00pm

BRIMINGTON - Community Centre, High Street
Monday 9.15am - 12.15pm

CLAY CROSS - Adult Education Centre, Market Street
Monday 9.30am - 12.30pm

ECKINGTON - Business Centre, Market Street
Monday 1.30pm - 3.30pm

NORTH WINGFIELD - Community Resources Centre,
Whiteleas Ave
Thursday 1.00pm - 3.30pm

GRASSMOOR - Community Centre, New Street
Thursday 10.00 am - 12 noon

STAVELEY - Staveley Library
Mondays & Wednesdays 9.30am - 12.30pm

Bolsover District

44 Patchwork Row, Shirebrook, NG20 8AL
Tel: 01623 748161 Fax: 01623 743316
Monday - Thursday 9.00am - 11.30am

BOLSOVER - Bainbridge Hall, Carr Vale
Monday 1.30pm - 4pm

CLOWNE - Mill Street,
Tuesday 1.00pm - 3.30pm

CRESWELL - Limestone House, Elmton Road,
Thursday 1.00pm - 3.30pm

PINXTON - Village Hall, Kirkstead Road,
Tuesday 1.00pm - 3.30pm

Amber Valley

Suite 4, Alfreton House, High Street, Tel: 01773 832237
Tuesday 9.00am - 12 noon
Wednesday/Thursday 9.00am - 12 noon/1.00pm - 4.00pm

HEANOR - Salcare, Ray Street,
Friday 8.30am - 12.30pm

SOMERCOTES - Parish Hall, Nottingham Road,
Monday 1.30pm - 4.00pm

Management Committee 2014/2015

The Management Committee would like to thank all those who have given freely of their time and talents throughout the year in pursuit of the aims and objectives of the Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres.

Chair

Cllr Graham Baxter MBE
(N.E.Derbyshire District
Council)

Vice-Chair

John Knight

(Chesterfield & District
TUC)

Treasurer

Ian Rutledge (co-optee)

Chesterfield Borough Council

Councillor Amanda Serjeant

Derbyshire County Council

John Owen

Alfreton Town Council

Steve Marshall-Clark

Mary Kerry

Bolsover Town Council

Councillor Ann Syrett

Chesterfield & District Trades Union Council

Barry Johnson

Derbyshire Association of Trades Union Councils

Shay Boyle

Members

John Gilbert, Elaine Tidd,
Nicolo Ferrera, Angela
Webster, Keith O'Neill,
Caroline Randall, Hilary

Cave, Allison Jarvis, Karen
Seymour

Co-optees

Dave Marriott (PCS)

Reuben Redhead (ACCA)

Sarah Roy (Law Centre)

Centre Staff 2014

Colin Hampton
(Co-ordinator)

Andy Parkes (Assistant
Co-ordinator/Welfare Rights
Advisor)

Lynn Bagshaw
(Administrator)

Tim Wilkinson -
Welfare Rights

Katrina Hudson -
Welfare Rights

Glynn Power -
Welfare Rights

Justine Bark -
Welfare Rights

Paul Marklew -
Welfare Rights

Jane Marriott -
Welfare Rights

John Bradley -
Welfare Rights



Thanks

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our OFFA Contributors and all our supporters.



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