



# UNEMPLOYED WORKERS' CENTRES

## Trade Union

- In work benefits and tax credits advice
- Facilities and support for Trade Unionists in dispute
- Help with recruitment to union membership
- Help in raising the profile of the TUC and Trade Unions.



## OFFA

- Supports Unemployed Workers' Centres
- Is solidarity, not charity
- Schemes are established throughout the country
- There are many ways to give
- You can donate from as little as £1 per month.

## Check-off

- Give to OFFA directly from your wages

## Bankers Standing Order

- Just ask for a form

## Cash or Cheque

- Donate to OFFA now!

## Unemployed Workers Centres

Campaigning



# Annual Report 2007

Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres

# Today Derbyshire - Tomorrow the World

The Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres have built a reputation as one of the most active organisations campaigning against poverty. This fine reputation stretches further than the Derbyshire boundary and is not confined by the borders of the United Kingdom. Bob Pemberton, Assistant Coordinator, is now representing the TUC at the National Liaison Forum of JobcentrePlus and also at the DWP National Strategy Forum. Colin Hampton is

continuing his work with the European Anti-Poverty Network and has been asked to chair their Minimum Income campaign.

## Towns and Villages

However the National and European work of the DUWCs is built on the solid base of advice work and lobbying that is carried out in the towns and villages of Derbyshire. It is this everyday, face to face help, support and representation that gives our workers and volunteers the experience and authority to have an input in wider circles.

The Peanuts4Benefits campaign, born in Derbyshire, was seen as an example of how a campaign can raise the profile of the need for minimum income standards across Europe.

The experiences of Derbyshire residents caught up in the summer floods have led to work being done to make changes in the way people can access money for essential items. The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Peter Hain, has agreed to meet the Unemployed Workers' Centres to look for a better alternative to the woefully inadequate Social Fund.

## Lobbying

The lobbying work the Centres' Staff and volunteers have carried out to stop unemployed people losing their benefits to a punitive



*Councillor Paul Buckley*

and unreasonable JSA sanctions regime has led to the development of a Rights Card. It is hoped that following its introduction in North Derbyshire, it can be rolled out across Derbyshire and then Nationally.

From Heanor to Holmewood, from Somercotes to Staveley and from Eckington to Alfreton it is the voice of those facing difficulties and low incomes that fuels the work that puts Unemployed Workers' Centres on the map.

## Support of Local Authorities

Of course none of this could be done without the support of the Local Authorities, Town and Parish Councils. These bodies have built and maintained the base which allows the DUWCs to make a difference to the people of Derbyshire. All Councils have to look very carefully at how they spend their money and I challenge anyone reading this report to argue that the DUWCs don't repay that investment tenfold in the income and benefits they secure for the poorest members of these communities.

*Cllr Paul Buckley*

## Contents

Today Derbyshire - Tomorrow the World! Cllr Paul Buckley	2
The Co-ordinator writes Colin Hampton	3
Your Voice Your Rights!	4-5
New Projects	6-7
Fundraising	8
Statistics	9
Chesterfield	10-11
Bolsover	11-12
Amber Valley	13
N.E. Derbyshire	14
Max your money	15
Management Committee/ Where to get advice?	16

*The co-ordinator writes...*

## Goodbye to 54 Saltergate

**We have been notified by Chesterfield Borough Council that we are to be served an eviction notice for 54 Saltergate in the next year. 54 Saltergate has been our headquarters since June 1985.**

### Portacabin

Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres started life in Chesterfield when moving out of Trade Union offices into a rented Portacabin on Shepley's Yard in April 1983. Two years later with the development of Shepley's Yard we moved to our present premises in the former model railway shop on Saltergate. The building, a temporary construction erected in the 1960's has been our home for over 20 years. It has been a bit of a love/hate relationship. On the

positive side it has offered a high profile in the town, being situated on a major thoroughfare through the town. It has been extremely well used, providing a friendly welcoming atmosphere. The negatives are many, including being freezing cold in winter and unbearably hot in summer. The flat roof gave us many problems with water seeping into the building. The discovery of asbestos in the fabric of the building made repairs impossible and the last four years have seen even more deterioration.

### Voluntary Sector

Many reading this report will know we have been trying to move premises for years. However, it is very difficult for a voluntary sector organisation to



*Colin Hampton*

secure grants to move premises. Many people who use our services need us to be town centre based, near to public transport links and in accessible premises. DUWCs cannot afford to pay higher rents as we are already struggling to make ends meet. The Management Committee is exploring a number of options but until we are clear with regard to our funding for the next financial year it is difficult for any decisions to be made. Whatever happens we will survive – you can be sure of that.



*Mid 1980's - a car crashes through the front of the building. Fortunately no one was hurt.*

*Your Voice Your Rights!*

# JSA Rights Card

**No-one can accuse the DUWC's of giving up easily. Since the introduction of Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) in the mid 1990's we have consistently campaigned against the use of withdrawal of benefits as a means of punishing unemployed workers who are considered to have breached their so called Job Seekers agreements with the employment service.**

## Benefit Sanctions

The DUWC's have had hundreds of people coming to us, over the past year, wanting help following benefit sanctions. The withdrawal of benefits is a drastic measure and is done without warning. We have put the case for a proper warning system to be put in place but despite a sympathetic response from local jobcentre plus managers the idea has been dogged with legal objections from those responsible for the administration of the JSA regime.

We are now attempting to forge an agreement, with the support of Natascha Engel MP, for the issuing of a 'rights card' to be given to JSA claimants on the 13th week of their claim. This is in order to try and avoid the 'surprise' element in the sanctions regime which all agree is in no-ones interests. The DUWC's remain committed to the abolition of sanctions in the benefits system.



DERBYSHIRE  
County Council  
Improving life for local people

DERBYSHIRE UNEMPLOYED  
WORKERS' CENTRES

DERBYSHIRE  
County Council  
Improving life for local people



Unemployed Workers Centre	01246 231441
Derbyshire Benefits Helpline	0845 1202985
Citizens Advice Chesterfield	01246 209164
North East Derbyshire	0844 8489800



DERBYSHIRE  
County Council  
Improving life for local people

DERBYSHIRE UNEMPLOYED  
WORKERS' CENTRES

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County Council  
Improving life for local people



NEED ADVICE ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS?

HAD A WARNING ABOUT JOBSEEKING?

HAD YOUR BENEFITS STOPPED?

INDEPENDENT ADVICE & ASSISTANCE IS  
AVAILABLE FROM THE AGENCIES ON THE  
REVERSE OF THIS CARD

## Floods Expose Social Fund Chaos

**The summer floods were an unwelcome surprise to the residents of Derbyshire living in the affected areas. Their problems were compounded when having to deal with the Social Fund as a means of replacing essential items following flood damage.**

The Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres in our usual proactive style didn't wait for people to come to us after the floods – we leafleted the affected areas offering our help, assistance and representation. Many victims came to us asking for help with claims to the Social Fund. Many of the tenants of the affected properties were without insurance as their low incomes put premiums beyond their reach.

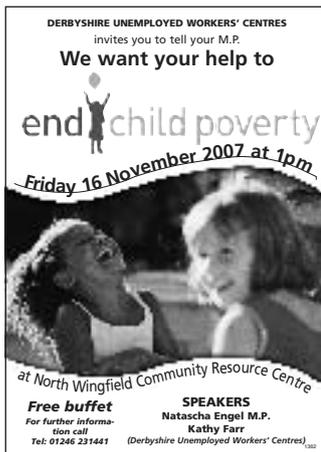
## Essential Items

People lost essential items such as cookers, fridges and washing machines as well as soft furnishings. The only help available is from the Social Fund – that is either a Loan or a Community Care Grant. Crisis loans are repayable, but, Community Care Grants are not, and as such are subject to strict criteria. To be entitled to apply, claimants must be in receipt of Income based Job Seekers' Allowance (JSA), Income Support or Pension Credit. Many of the flood victims that our advisors saw did not qualify, yet their incomes were no higher than the people who did.

The DUWCs are working towards a complete overhaul of the Social Fund system and have secured a meeting with Peter Hain, The DWP Minister, to discuss the way forward. It makes no sense to burden people with extra debts who are already struggling to get by. There must also be a better contingency for emergencies. To those who say that everyone should have insurance we ask – how much of a claimant's £59.15 JSA should be set aside for insurance purposes?



## Centres Commit to Help End Child Poverty



Meetings have been arranged with local MPs.

Green from the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) and Francis O'Grady the Deputy General Secretary of the TUC.

The DUWCs are now hosting meetings with local MPs as part of the ECP month of action.

The aim of the meeting is to urge our local representatives to raise the issue of child poverty in Parliament at every opportunity and to pressure government to fulfil its commitments.

*Kathy Farr delivers a presentation at a meeting with Chesterfield MP Paul Holmes*



DUWCs have given active support to the End Child Poverty coalition (ECP) in the ongoing campaign to keep the government to its pledge to rid us of child poverty by 2020. The Unemployed Workers' Centres held a joint fringe meeting with ECP at the TUC Conference in Brighton with speakers Kate



*The Employment Task Force of the EAPN.*

## Europe

The European Anti Poverty Network has asked Centre Co-ordinator, Colin Hampton to chair the Minimum Income Campaign.

Colin has served on the EAPN's Employment Task force for ten years. DUWCs continues to play an active role at a National and European level to make sure that those on benefits have a voice on policies that concern and directly affect them.

## Centres Help with University Benefits Projects

DUWCs, together with Zacchaeus 2000, ATD 4th World and the Family Project in Brighton are conducting a research project into people's experiences of dealing with the benefits and tax credits system.

The University of Brighton Health and Social Policy Research Centre is co-ordinating the project.

In Derbyshire, Lamin Daffeh, a volunteer at The Centres who is studying for a law degree has been conducting the interviews with benefit claimants.

The Report that will be produced as a result of the research will be used to input into a conference to be held next year. It is also hoped that it will provide a basis for a more extensive study at a later date.

The interviews conducted at our Chesterfield Office have thrown up massive problems experienced by people in relation to Jobseeker's Allowance, Tax Credits, Incapacity Benefits and the problems of accessing and dealing with an under-resourced Public Service.

## Centre Projects

### Industrial Injuries Take-up

DUWCs have been awarded a grant from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to extend the take-up of Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit and other related benefits in the Middlecroft/ Poolsbrook & Rother wards of Chesterfield.

The grant will enable us to employ a development worker for 9 months who will target these wards to make sure that those who have been injured or made ill by their work receive what they are entitled to. The worker will co-ordinate publicity and arrange surgeries or home visits to meet those who may be eligible to make a claim, including tribunal representation if required.

### Macmillan

The Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres will be working closely with the Derbyshire Asbestos Support Team (DAST) which has been successful in a bid to Macmillan Cancer Support.

DAST has been awarded £153,000 for period of 5 years; however, the final 2 years are tapered. The Development Worker will provide welfare rights advice to anyone diagnosed with an asbestos related disease in the East Midlands. The bid included an amount of £15,020 (over 5 years) for the Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres to provide training and support costs to the Development Worker.

You might be ENTITLED to

**Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit**

**Incapacity Benefit**

**Disability Living Allowance/ Attendance Allowance**

Caring for someone with an illness/injury caused by work?

You might be entitled to Carer's Allowance

**This service is free, independent & confidential**  
We partner with Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres

Telephone 01246 231441  
and ask for an Industrial Injuries Benefits Check  
Quoting Reference IIP

Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres  
Here to help you with

**Industrial Injuries Welfare Benefit Claims**

Have you been injured at work?  
Has your work made you ill?

Leaflets and posters encouraging people to come forward



### Moving Forward

Our work, in partnership with the Staveley Neighbourhood Management Committee, to help bring those furthest from the labour market closer to employment is gathering pace.

The project funded by the Coalfields Regeneration Trust has so far helped people in the Middlecroft and Poolsbrook area and people in the wider Staveley locality. The project gives extra assistance to those on Incapacity Benefit and works to break down barriers and discrimination by employers to those with health limiting conditions. With the prospect of thousands of jobs coming to the area with the development of Markham Vale, this initiative is an important tool in making sure that Staveley does not miss out on the opportunities.

# Centres' Offer Help to Migrant Workers

With the support of The Regional TUC the Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres are giving help to migrant workers in North Derbyshire.

We have recruited a volunteer, Kamila Dzbanyszek, who will be helping with the translation of publicity materials. Kamila is training to become a volunteer Welfare Rights Advisor with us. We are planning an open day to be held at our Shirebrook Office before Christmas. This initiative will help to spread awareness of the help that we can offer with advice on Tax Credits in particular. Chesterfield Law Centre will be offering specialist services with respect to housing and immigration issues. Together with the Law Centre and the Trade Unions we hope to make sure that migrant workers have access to information, organisation and services to secure their rights and avoid exploitation.



*Kamila Dzbanyszek*

## 2008 UK Poverty Campaign

The Derbyshire Unemployed Workers Centres will be supporting the 2008 UK Poverty Campaign. To kick things off in late January the Centres will organise a poverty and homeless action week.

### Homelessness

We hope to bring together organisations concerned with housing and homelessness to provide the opportunity for people with direct experience of poverty and/or homelessness or poor housing to speak out for themselves – while encouraging those with power, authority and different experiences to listen. Contact the DUWC for details in the new year.

Type of Appeal	Completed	Pending
Disability Living Allowance & Attendance Allowance	70	39
Incapacity Benefit	47	31
Income Support	2	6
Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (see note 1)	45	10
Housing Benefit & Council Tax Benefit	1	-
Job Seekers Allowance	8	8
Tax Credits	3	7
Other	3	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>106</b>

**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:**

<b>Lump Sum Arrears:</b>	<b>£183,108</b>
<b>Ongoing Weekly Benefits p.a.:</b>	<b>£309,308</b>

Over a year general enquiries at the Centres and Outreach Offices (as well as by home visits) resulted in payments amounting to £975,375 for Derbyshire residents.

**During the last year this has meant a total of**

**£1,467,791**  
**has been won**

## Supporting the Centres

**It seems that with every passing year, Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres' funding mix widens, incorporating fresh ideas to help keep the Centres afloat.**

### Local Councils

As ever, the foundations of our funding in 2007 were laid by local councils, who provide the much needed grants that make up our vital core funding. Without these, we would be unable to apply to other funding bodies such as the Coalfields Regeneration Trust and Derbyshire Community Foundation, and so council funding enables us to attract thousands more into our community. In addition to our major Benefits Take Up project, in its 3rd and final year, we have received a further 2 grants this year from the Coalfields Regeneration Trust, to fund the Staveley based Moving Forward Project and a Shirebrook based volunteer recruitment project. The Coalfields Regeneration Trust administered European Regional Development Fund has also enabled us to launch an Industrial Injuries Take Up project in Middlecroft and Rother towards the end of the year. Our work with the victims of the Chesterfield floods in June also attracted funding from the Jefford Weller Fund and the Church Urban Fund. The Jefford Weller grant will enable us to campaign for changes to the Social Fund, as highlighted by our flood work.

### Legacy

Another boost for our campaign work came in the form of a legacy from long term One Fund For All supporter Jack Allwright. This will help us to step up our work to end poverty benefit levels in 2008. In addition, we must thank the many Centre users and supporters that have donated to the fund in some way, either through Check-off, Bankers Standing Order, Great Weather Lottery, cash donation or donation in kind e.g. books and mobile phones. Our second hand book sales continue to bring in a steady stream of income to the Centres, as well as selling in our waiting rooms and on stalls, we have now set up an eBay account. This is an excellent way of selling on the donations of specialist books that we receive at a good price to enthusiasts – and has attracted buyers from as far afield as Germany. An "About Me" page has been set up to inform buyers of what their money will be used for, and the eBay community has been very supportive of our work.

The Great Weather Lottery continues to bring in a steady stream of income, and this year we had our first £200 winner, bringing the total of prizes given out over the year to £408. To join, please contact Sarah for an application form.



**To discuss any aspect of the Centres'**

**Fundraising, please contact Sarah Walters on 01246 231441 sarah.walters@duwc.org.uk**

### Thanks to...

**Derbyshire County Council  
Chesterfield Borough Council  
North East Derbyshire District Council  
Bolsover District Council  
Alfreton Town Council  
Clay Cross Parish Council  
Clowne Parish Council  
Eckington Parish Council  
Grassmoor, Hasland & Winsick Parish Council  
Salcare Heanor  
Somercotes Parish Council  
Staveley Neighbourhood Management  
Staveley Town Council**

**Coalfields Regeneration Trust  
European Regional Development Fund  
Derbyshire Community Foundation  
Jefford Weller Fund  
Church Urban Fund  
Anonymous Charitable Trusts**

**Servelec Staff  
Wilkinsons**

Supported by

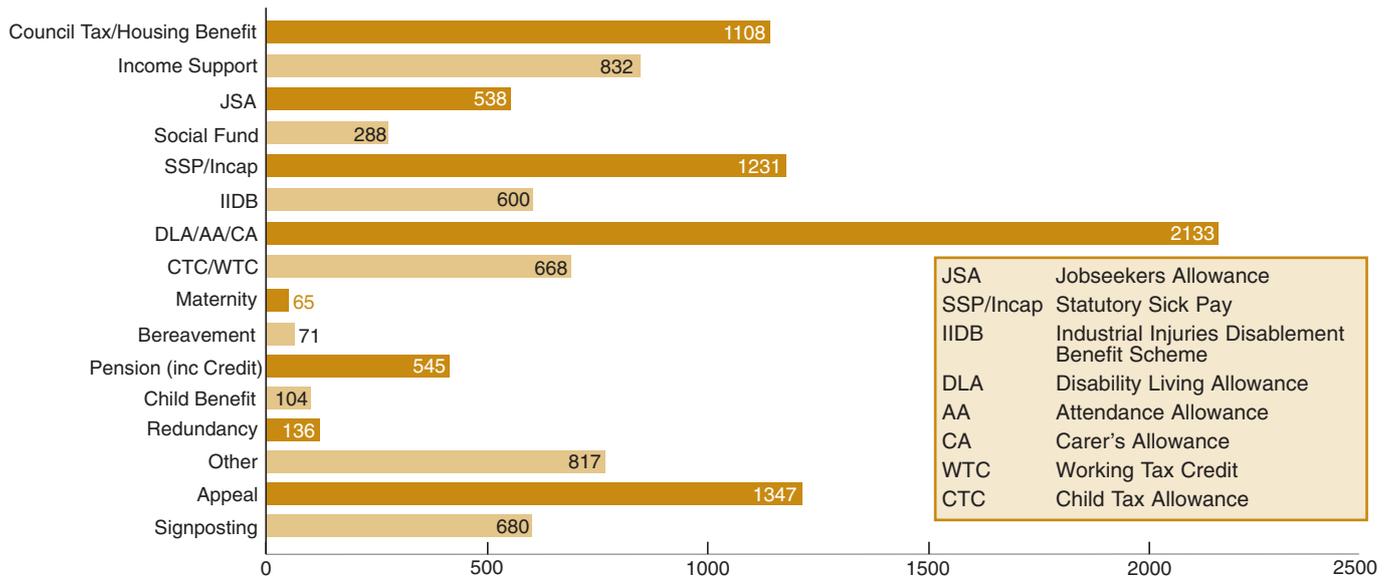


**the coalfields  
regeneration trust**

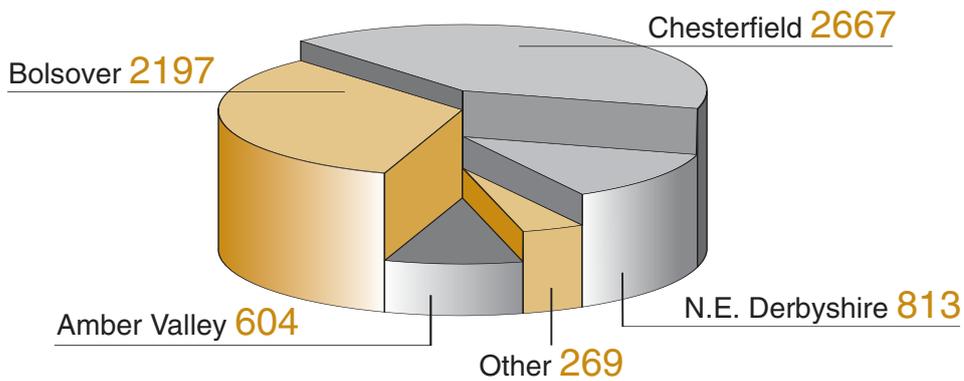


**Part-financed by the European Union  
European Regional Development Fund**

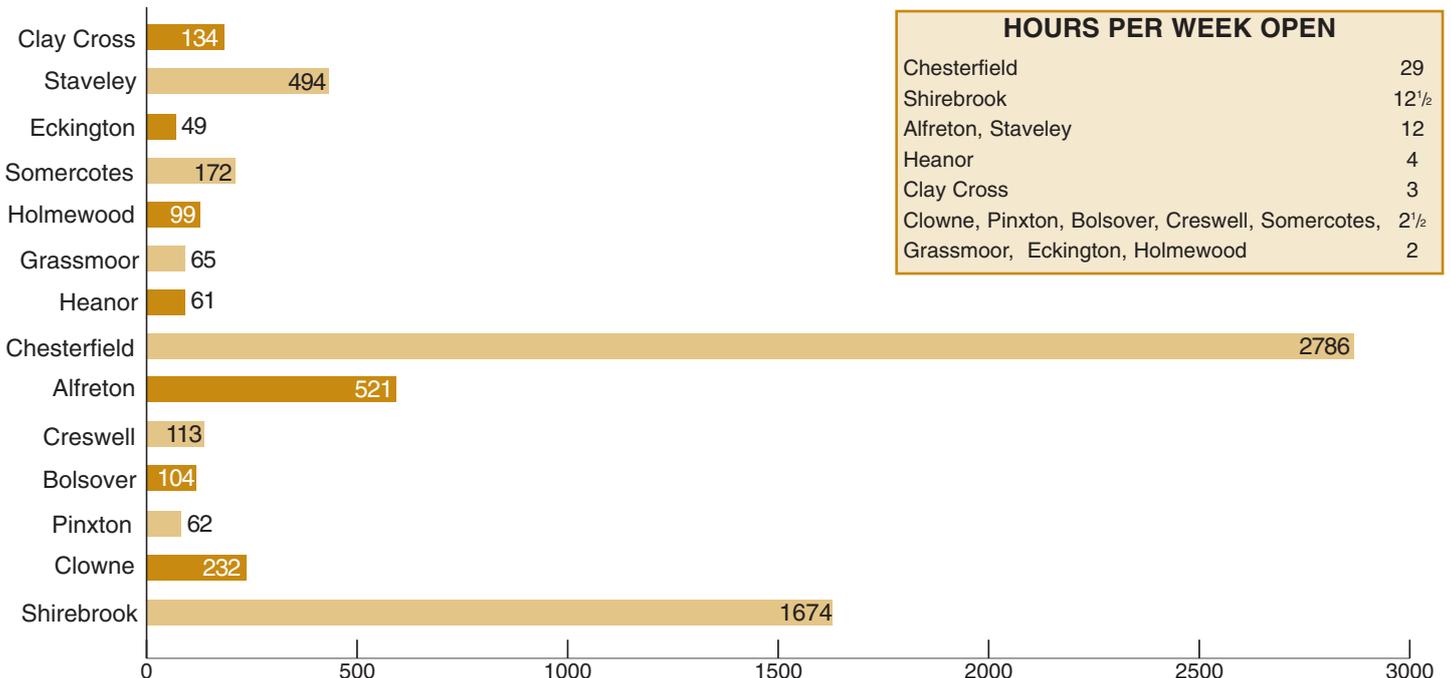
## ENQUIRY TOTALS 2006/2007



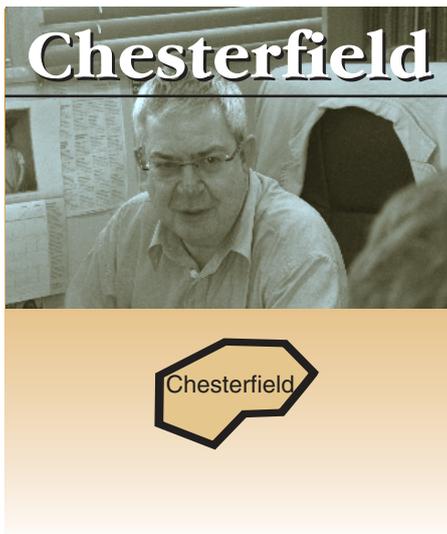
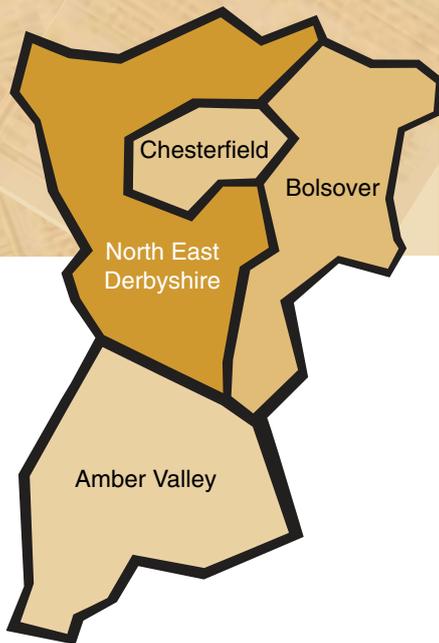
## ORIGIN OF ENQUIRIES



## VENUE CALLER TOTALS 2006/2007



# Around the area



## Last Year at '54'

This has been another busy year and probably our last at 54 Saltergate. (see 'the Coordinator writes')

## Employment Support Allowance

We have continued to deal with many applications for Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance, Pension Credit, Industrial Injury Disablement Benefit, Working & Child Tax Credits, Incapacity Benefit,

Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. We have also started to look at the implications of the new Employment Support Allowance which will replace Incapacity Benefit and Income Support for the sick from around October next year. Already we have identified a number of issues which will significantly reduce entitlement to many claimants and we will campaign vigorously to get these draft rules changed.

## Quality of Service?

Over the year we have become more and more aware of the deterioration in both the level and quality of service from the Department for Work and Pensions and particularly JobcentrePlus. The move to call centres and the pressure for claimants to conduct all business by telephone has led to a worsening of the service and many callers to DUWC arrive already feeling frustrated by the delays and mixed messages they have been given.

## Cuts

We maintain our support for the workers within the DWP in their fight against the cuts that have already seen over 30,000 jobs lost. We continue to press the Government to recognise the need for adequate staffing within the DWP to provide a level of service that all claimants deserve.

## Redundancy

Redundancy has continued to plague industry in Chesterfield. In Staveley both St Gobain and Rhodia have closed, transferring work to other parts of the world

After over ten years of campaigning by TRUST and DUWC and success in changing the legislation, the workers at Vinatex who had developed Raynaud's disease as a result of working with Vinyl Chloride Monomer at the Vinatex plant in Staveley were finally allowed to proceed with their appeals against the decision of the DWP that they were not entitled to claim Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit. At a hearing held in Chesterfield on 19th March 2007 all four succeeded in their claim that they suffered from the disease as prescribed by Parliament and as a result over £15,000 in benefit arrears was awarded and three of the appellants secured a weekly income of £25.42.

where cheap labour and unregulated employment practices allow more profit to be made. Just after we concluded our advice sessions at Staveley St Gobain announced the closure of their plant in Stanton, near Ilkeston. Again we attended the site and gave advice to all those who needed it. This closure also effectively marked the end of specialist pipe production in the UK. In March GKN then announced the closure of their Sheepbridge site. Over 300 jobs have gone already and the rest will have gone before Christmas. We produced a booklet for all affected workers and spent 5 days on site giving 1:1 advice. It is a sad fact that we may well have to deliver less redundancy advice in the coming year only because virtually all large industries in Chesterfield have now closed!

## Staveley

Thanks to Staveley Neighbourhood Management (SNM) we have continued to provide advice and representation in Staveley via the Learning Matters Centre on High Street.

The sessions are extremely busy with useage rising following the *Max your Money* take up campaign in the area.

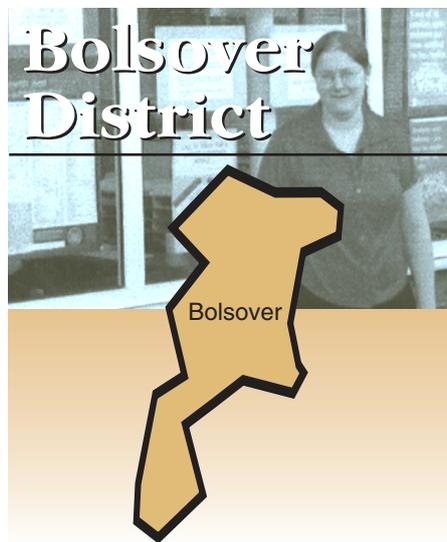
However, the worry is for the long term future of the Staveley Sessions as the SNM begins to wind down. It would be a disaster if Staveley were left with no open door advice surgeries in the future because of a lack of core funding.

## Debt and Money Advice

In the immediate future though we continue to work hard for the people of Staveley and welcome the provision of debt and money advice from the Chesterfield CAB alongside our sessions at Learning Matters.

A young Chesterfield resident was diagnosed by his consultant with severe kidney disease and told he would probably need a transplant. He was very ill feeling tired and lethargic all the time but this did not stop the DWP instructing him to attend a medical examination as part of his claim for Incapacity Benefit. At the medical the DWP doctor decided that he only suffered from a mild degree of kidney problem and that he scored no points in the examination. This was despite the fact that he had now been put on notice to attend hospital as soon as contacted if a suitable organ became available for transplant.

We assisted him with an appeal and at the hearing the tribunal immediately accepted that the decision of the DWP had been completely at odds with the medical evidence to hand and that the view of the DWP doctor was entirely at variance with the other medical evidence. His claim was reinstated and he had his weekly benefit of £95.00 restored as well as receiving £1,610.20 in arrears.



## Concerns over Benefits Administration

**Our work over the last twelve months has highlighted the growing concerns we have over the way the Department of Work and Pensions is administering benefits. We have received an ever growing influx of complaints from people within the communities of the Bolsover District, about particular aspects of benefit delivery.**

### Grievances

Old and young alike are seeking our help in conveying their grievances to the various agencies charged with processing their particular claims. The move by the DWP to a largely telephone based claims system has become a nightmare for many, causing distress and even financial hardship, as internal restructuring and subsequent downsizing creates ever lengthening processing times. This situation has a knock on effect for our advice team, as they face an increasing work load. Apart from the general advice giving and representation, we also

have to deal with the inadequacies of an ever changing benefits system. We continue to work with local MP's, in both highlighting on-going problems and particular cases which have needed our urgent attention, especially where claimants have been forced into financial hardship.

Our outreach advice venues continue to be well attended. The various take-up campaigns held within the Bolsover District over the last two years have resulted in increased numbers of people seeking advice on all matters relating to welfare benefits.

In May of this year we held a take-up week in the communities of Clowne and Creswell. Both the Limestone House Resource Centre in Creswell and the Community Centre in Clowne are continuing to benefit from the week long event with visiting numbers on the increase.

### New Venue

On the 6th of August this year we moved our advice sessions in Bolsover to a new venue. We have been providing benefits advice in the community for a number of years, working out of the Adult Education Centre on the High Street. We were therefore delighted to be asked by the Centre Manager to re-locate with them to their new home on Castle Street (the former Church of England School adjacent to the Castle) the day and time of our sessions has not changed; we are there in our usual Monday afternoon slot from 1.00 pm to 3.30 pm. Early indicators were very good; three people attended the new outreach venue the first week following the move.

### Bridging the Gap

In October we secured funding from the Coalfields Regeneration Trust's Bridging the Gap, a six

month project enabling us to recruit new volunteers with a view to helping them train as welfare rights advisors. All new volunteers will be based at our Shirebrook office where they will receive training and support from our advice team.

## Volunteers

Volunteers are the lifeblood of our organisation, and their recruitment should ensure that we are able provide the level of service people expect of us long into the future.

In May of this year a young woman from the Shirebrook area with severe learning difficulties was sign-posted to 44 Patchwork Row by the Housing Options Team at Bolsover District Council.

At the time she was living in the Council's Homeless Unit, waiting rehousing when suitable accommodation became available. This followed an unsettled way of life including a long period of homelessness. Social Services became involved with her in the winter of 2006 assessing her as a vulnerable person; they eventually referred her to BDC.

It was an Officer from the Housing Options Team at BDC who identified a shortfall in the young woman's benefit entitlement. She was living on approximately £66.00 per week, which was Severe Disablement Allowance a benefit she had been in receipt of since the mid 1990's. The officer referred the lady to Shirebrook Job Centre in November 2006 for help with a claim for Income Support. For some reason the claim failed, with the young woman continuing to live below the level of income allowed in law.

Around the end of April 2007 the same Council Officer who identified the issue of un-claimed benefit realised that the young woman was still not in receipt of income support, it was then she decided to sign-post her to our organisation. She was also due to move into her new accommodation in the near future.

We quickly helped her claim income support; identified the need to help her claim a Community Care Grant for furniture, carpets and household items for her new home. Next we assisted her with a Disability Living Allowance claim, on the basis of her need for someone to accompany her out of doors especially in unfamiliar surroundings, as she found it difficult to communicate her needs or deal with situations requiring a certain level of insight and understanding.

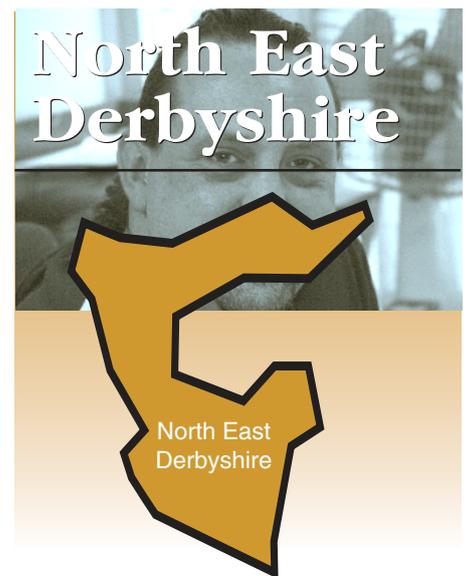
The young woman was awarded income support backdated from an earlier period; she received a community care grant to enable her to furnish her new home; she was awarded Disability Living Allowance because of her difficulties out of doors. All in all she is now at least £35.00 a week better off and living in a comfortable home. The last time she visited our centre it was to thank us for the help and support we gave her during a difficult time in her life.

A man from Shirebrook reached his 60th Birthday in March of this year. He made a claim for Pension Credit by telephone to try to speed up the process. At the end of April he received a request for further information which he quickly provided (documents were returned to him within a week)

By June he was still waiting for the claim to be sorted. He rang the Pension Service only to be told that his claim had been out sourced to another area of the country, and would soon be finalised. At the end of July he rang again, and was told it would be a matter of days and he would receive an entitlement notice and payment in to his bank.

By mid August there had been no letter or entitlement. It was at this point that the gentleman sought our help with the matter. We rang the Pension Service who informed us that his claim was with the red team. The advisor stated that a member of the red team would ring him back to provide an update on the status of the claim. We did protest, stating that the department had promised payment way back in June. A week later the gentleman was back at our centre, the Pension Service had failed to ring him back as promised. We rang again demanding action, only to be told after a 30 minute wait that the claim had been lost; the gentleman was distraught.

We then helped him make a new claim and demanded that it was fast tracked. The Pension Service did oblige, with information being faxed from the local Job Centre Plus office to the relevant department. The claim was sorted within 2 days, including payments into the gentleman's bank. He was grateful and said he would advise anyone to contact us if they found themselves in a similar situation.



## New Challenge for Neil

**This year with Vincent Smile moving to new employment, Neil Buxton now has responsibility for the North East Derbyshire outreaches.**

Neil reports the following:-  
"Firstly, I'd like to thank the people of N. E. Derbyshire for welcoming me into their community. My first 10 months as the Welfare

Rights Worker for N. E. Derbyshire have been eventful, with numerous challenges. I advise at sessions in Clay Cross on a Monday morning, at the Adult Education Centre, The St Albans Parish Centre, Holmewood on Tuesday mornings and the Community Centre in Grassmoor on a Friday morning. The venues are clean, warm and welcoming and all have refreshment facilities if you have to wait for advice.

## Overpayments

The main area of difficulties have involved Tax Credits and Incapacity Benefit. Tax Credits present numerous problems ranging from overpayments and, more commonly, when a claimant rings up Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs (HMRC) to enquire if they can claim tax credits they are often told that they are earning too much. To rectify this I always advise that the claimant request an application form and does not apply over the phone.

## Challenges

Incapacity Benefit presents its own challenges. Many N. E. Derbyshire residents I come into contact with regarding the Personal Capability Assessment (PCA) have often filled in their Incapacity for Work Questionnaire themselves and have then had to attend a medical. It is usually days later, when they receive notification that they have failed to acquire the required number of points to pass the PCA, that I come into contact with them. It is at this stage that an Appeal is lodged and the process of obtaining medical evidence to support their appeal begins. This in itself is a challenge as some GPs are reluctant to provide medical evidence to support their patients claim to benefit. This is not their fault as last year pressure was put on GPs to cut down the number

of sick notes that they issued, and they are reluctant to argue against a doctor employed by the DWP as to a persons' ability to work.

## Case Study

One such case was a resident who was suffering from severe depression and her condition was worsening. Despite repeated increases of her medication by her GP and a sick note stating that she should refrain from work indefinitely, the DWP still refused to accept that she could not work because their Examining Medical Practitioner said she could. At Tribunal the Panel questioned her briefly and adjourned to make their decision. Upon their decision being reached I went into the Tribunal alone, as the strain was too much for my appellant. When I entered the Chair stated that he was not surprised to see me on my own and announced that the decision was unanimous and they had awarded points more than sufficiently to pass the PCA. The Chair also expressed concerns about the appellant's state of mind as she was hearing voices and requested that I speak to her and persuade her to seek a referral to the mental health services, this was echoed by the Panel doctor.

## Fit for Work

Another case was a resident who was an alcohol dependant. Despite turning up for her medical in the morning and having had a drink, the DWP doctor declared her fit for work. I was able to obtain a letter from her alcohol counsellor and her GP stating her drink problems and related physical and mental health issues, but still the DWP would not back down. On the day of the Tribunal I received a phone call from the Tribunal Suite in Chesterfield stating that the Appeal had been granted in

absence. The panel Chair and doctor had read through the case papers and had granted her exemption from the PCA on the grounds that she would be a danger to herself and/or others if she were to work.

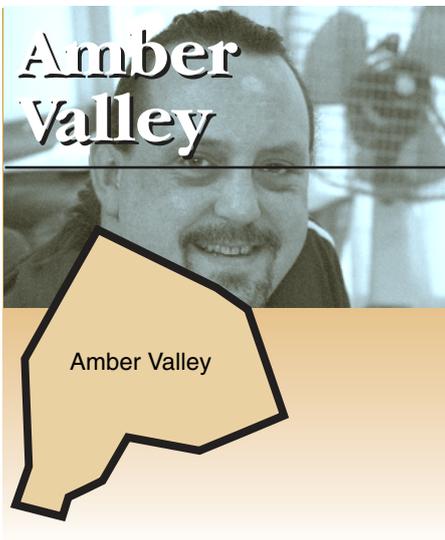
## Benefits

I look forward to helping many more such residents of N. E. Derbyshire in the future and will endeavour to assist them claim benefits they are entitled to. I also look forward to forging links with other organizations working in the N. E. Derbyshire communities

A young man in North East Derbyshire lived with his father. His father then decided he wanted to realise his share of the house which he still jointly owned with his ex wife. Rather than see her son become homeless she agreed to take out a mortgage to buy her ex husband's share provided her son signed a tenancy agreement to pay rent to cover the cost of the mortgage. All was OK until he went sick and his only income was Incapacity Benefit.

He made a claim for Housing Benefit but the Council refused to pay on the ground that it was not a commercial arrangement because his mother had not tried to evict him when the rent fell into arrears. He appealed but it took 10 months for the papers to be submitted to the Tribunal Service. When the appeal was eventually heard the decision was that the tenancy agreement was a commercial arrangement and that Housing benefit should be paid. This meant that almost £18,000 was due in benefit. Because of this his mother would not have to sell the house and he continues to have a home.

for the benefit of its residents”.



## Town and Parish Councils keep the service in Amber Valley

Thanks to the support of Alfreton Town Council, Salcare in Heanor, Somercotes Parish Council and Amber Valley Housing we have been able to continue to offer a service to many residents in Amber Valley.

Alfreton continues to be our busiest office outside Chesterfield and Shirebrook and deals with the whole range of benefits and tax credits. Many referrals come to us from Amber Valley Housing's welfare worker and we have been able to secure additional benefits for many of their tenants which have increased their entitlement to Housing Benefit and so avoided the risk of eviction.

## Weekly Sessions

In Heanor the ability to offer a weekly session has greatly improved the level of take-up in the area and we have assisted claimants in particular with Tax Credit problems, Housing and Council Tax Benefit applications and Disability Living Allowance claims.

## Rising Enquiries

The Somercotes outreach contin-

ues to be very busy. *The Max Your Money* take-up week for Ironville, Riddings, Leabrooks and Somercotes raised awareness of the weekly sessions. Following the successful event the number of enquiries rose with many citing the high profile publicity as the catalyst for their visit.

An Alfreton couple, both over 65 sought our advice. They had applied for a grant for home repairs but had been told that they would need to be getting at least some council tax benefit. Their joint income was £195.04 and they had savings of about £11,000. They thought that this would rule them out for benefit.

Because both were in receipt of Attendance Allowance at the high rate they had an entitlement to Pension Credit of £267.55 a week as well as some savings credit. This meant that they would be over £93 a week better off as well as qualifying for full council tax benefit. The home repairs grant would be paid in full.

## Centres Conference Focuses on Minimum Social Wage

The 2007 TUC Unemployed Workers Centres Conference was this year attended by the Minister for the Department of Work and Pensions, Peter Hain MP. The keynote speaker in the morning session was Mark Serwotka, General Secretary of the Public and Commercial Services Union.

The Centres in Derbyshire sent a full delegation of staff and volunteers and played a full part in both the workshop and plenary sessions. Mark Serwotka congratulated the Unemployed Workers Centres on their joint work with PCS on campaigns during the year. Following interventions

from the Derbyshire delegates the Minister agreed to meet with representatives of the UWC's in order that we would be able to have a better input on our areas of concern. The Minister agreed that the Social Fund needed reform and invited our help in achieving this.

Frances O'Grady, Deputy General Secretary of the TUC, closed the Conference and congratulated the Centres on their continued com-

mitment in support of claimants and Trade Unionists alike.

*Sbay Boyle, Natascha Engel, Colin Hampton and Frances O'Grady at the Unemployed Workers' Centres conference*



# Max your money

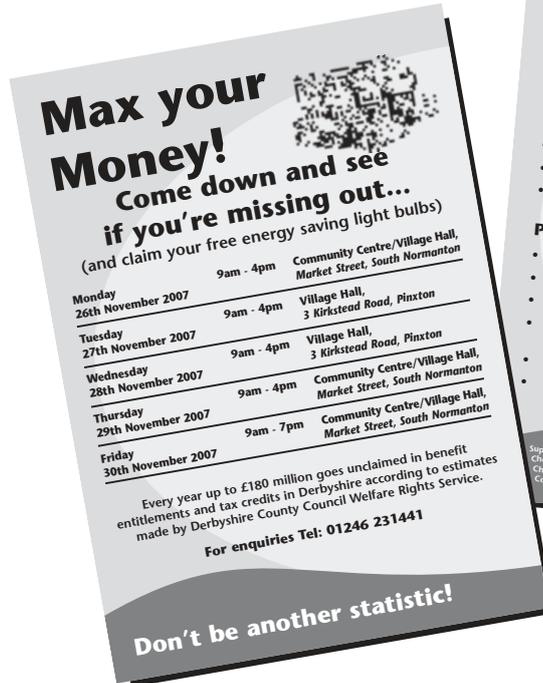
This year the Coalfield Regeneration Trust (CRT) project (Max Your Money) has raised another £500,000 for the residents of Bolsover, North East Derbyshire, Amber Valley and Chesterfield.

It is clear from the amount of claims generated the annualised benefit and credit figures to date will increase. This is because of the time it takes for claims to be processed.

With the continuing funding from the CRT, in the last year we have been able to help the following areas, Riddings, Somercotes, Leabrooks, Ironville, Clay Cross, Clowne, Creswell with Elmton, Barlborough, Inkersall, Lowgates, Woodthorpe, Markham and Middlecroft, as well as Brimington.

Once again the Benefits and Credits Take Up Campaigns have been a success because of the help and support of other organisations. We would like to express our thanks to the Welfare Rights Workers of Derbyshire County Council and North East Derbyshire Citizens Advice Bureau - also to the volunteers and Staff of TRUST, DAST, Derbyshire Coalition for Inclusive Living(DCIL), North East Derbyshire Home Improvement Agency, Credit Union and the Tinnitus Support Group.

The overall success can also be put down to the help and support

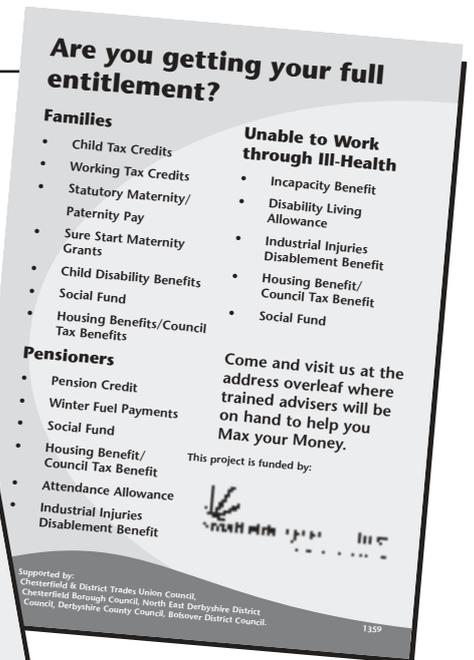


**Max your Money!**  
Come down and see if you're missing out...  
(and claim your free energy saving light bulbs)

Monday 26th November 2007	9am - 4pm	Community Centre/Village Hall, Market Street, South Normanton
Tuesday 27th November 2007	9am - 4pm	Village Hall, 3 Kirkstead Road, Pinxton
Wednesday 28th November 2007	9am - 4pm	Village Hall, 3 Kirkstead Road, Pinxton
Thursday 29th November 2007	9am - 4pm	Community Centre/Village Hall, Market Street, South Normanton
Friday 30th November 2007	9am - 7pm	Community Centre/Village Hall, Market Street, South Normanton

Every year up to £180 million goes unclaimed in benefit entitlements and tax credits in Derbyshire according to estimates made by Derbyshire County Council Welfare Rights Service.  
For enquiries Tel: 01246 231441

**Don't be another statistic!**



**Are you getting your full entitlement?**

**Families**

- Child Tax Credits
- Working Tax Credits
- Statutory Maternity/Paternity Pay
- Sure Start Maternity Grants
- Child Disability Benefits
- Social Fund
- Housing Benefits/Council Tax Benefits

**Unable to Work through Ill-Health**

- Incapacity Benefit
- Disability Living Allowance
- Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit
- Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit
- Social Fund

**Pensioners**

- Pension Credit
- Winter Fuel Payments
- Social Fund
- Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit
- Attendance Allowance
- Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit

Come and visit us at the address overleaf where trained advisers will be on hand to help you Max your Money.

This project is funded by:

Supported by:  
Chesterfield & District Trades Union Council,  
Chesterfield Borough Council, North East Derbyshire District Council, Derbyshire County Council, Bolsover District Council.

1359

from colleagues at the Centres not only with helping out on the actual benefit and credit take up week but also with leafleting in the weeks running up to the campaign. This year this has been no mean feat because of the bad weather we all have experienced. So once again a Big Thank You.

As the project is due to end in March 2008 we still have much to do with another two campaigns to be held. In November we will be covering South Normanton and Pinxton. In February 2008 it is the turn of Holmewood and Heath, Pilsley and Tibshelf.

Catherine Liffen and Natalie Woodward encourage all to Max Your Money!



# Management Committee 2006/2007

*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

Paul Buckley  
(Derbyshire County Council)

## Vice-Chair

Barry Johnson  
(Chesterfield & District TUC)

## Treasurer

Ian Rutledge  
(Workers' Education Association)

**Chesterfield Borough Council**  
Cllr Mark Higginbottom

**Bolsover District Council**  
Councillor Brian Hudless

**North East Derbyshire District Council**  
Cllr Graham Baxter

**Chesterfield & District Trades Union Council**  
Gill Whittaker & Roger Davenport

**Derbyshire County Association of Trades Councils**  
Mike Nelson

## Members

Keith O'Neill, Elaine Tidd,  
Dennis Clayton, Leslie Shooter,  
Hilary Cave, Lynn Fieldsend,  
Angela Gray, Frank Sims,  
Adrian Rimmington,  
John Gilbert, Sue Rawson,  
Neil Buxton, Kathy Farr,  
Caroline Tipple

## Co-optee

Dorothy Carter (ACCA)  
Sarah Roy, (Law Centre)

## Centre Staff

Colin Hampton - Co-ordinator  
Bob Pemberton - Assistant  
Co-ordinator/Welfare Rights  
Andy Parkes - Welfare Rights  
Natalie Woodward-Welfare Rights  
Neil Buxton - Welfare Rights  
Sarah Walters - One Fund For All  
Catherine Liffen - Admin Worker  
Lynn Haythorne - Admin Worker  
Ellie Lynall - Moving Forward

## WHERE TO GET ADVICE

### Chesterfield & North East Derbyshire

54 Saltergate, Chesterfield, S40 1JR

Tel/Fax: (01246) 231441

Email: [info@duwc.org.uk](mailto:info@duwc.org.uk)

Monday to Thursday 9.00am - 3.30pm

Friday 9.00am - 12.00 noon

**Clay Cross** - Adult Education Centre, Market Street

Monday 9.30am - 12.30pm

**Eckington** - Business Centre, Market Street

Monday 1.30pm - 3.30pm

**Grassmoor** - Community Centre, New Street

Friday 10.00am - 12.00 noon

**Holmewood** - St. Albans Centre, Heath Road

Tuesday 9.30am - 11.30am

**Staveley** - Learning Matters, High Street

Monday & Friday 9.00am - 12.00 noon

Wednesday 9.00am - 12.00 noon, 1.00pm - 4.00pm

### BOLSOVER DISTRICT

44 Patchwork Row, Shirebrook, NG20 8AL.

Tel: (01623) 748161 Fax: (01623) 743316

Monday - Friday 9.00am - 11.30am

**Bolsover** - Adult Education Centre, Castle Street - Monday 1.00pm - 3.30pm

**Clowne** - Community Centre, Recreation Close - Tuesday 1.00pm - 3.30pm

**Creswell** - Limestone House, Elmton Road - Thursday 9.00am - 11.30am

**Pinxton** - Village Hall - Tuesday 1.00pm - 3.30pm

### AMBER VALLEY

Suite 4, Alfreton House, High Street

Tel: (01773) 832237

Wednesday & Thursday 9.00am - 12.00 noon, 1.00pm - 4.00pm

**Heanor** - Salcare, Ray Street - Friday 8.30am - 12.30pm

**Somercotes** - Parish Hall, Nottingham Road - Monday 1.30pm - 4.00pm

*Thanks*

To all our funders, our Management Committee, our OFFA Contributors and all our supporters.



Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres are funded by Bolsover District Council, Chesterfield Borough Council, N. E. Derbyshire District Council, Derbyshire County Council, Staveley Neighbourhood Management, Coalfields Regeneration Trust, Derbyshire Community Foundation, Alfreton Town Council, Somercotes Parish Council, Salcare Heanor, as well as contributions raised through the One Fund For All.

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