



# Annual Report 2013

## Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres



# Who are we?

## 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

**Established in April 1983, the Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres are part of a much 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.**



*Staff and volunteers on their way to a conference in Durham in July.*

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.

This year the Big Lottery Fund is supporting us together with the Law Centre and CABs to train volunteer caseworkers. Andrew Parkes has the responsibility for training within the DUWCs. Chesterfield Law Centre is starting the training programme off by organising a casework skills training course that will give our new volunteers, together with those from other organisations, an initial grounding in the necessary skills needed for a career as a caseworker in the area of law they have chosen.

Following this induction Andrew Parkes will organise an ongoing

series of training opportunities in the field of Welfare Rights. Four volunteers have been accepted on to this process that will be a great boost to our ability to deliver advice services across Derbyshire.

## Volunteers

Andrena Jenkinson, Marie Harris, Sharon Coles have all found work this year following their volunteering. We would like to thank them for their commitment and dedication to the Centres and wish them well in their new ventures.

Justine Bark and Paul Marklew have joined the paid staff on a part time basis. A number of new volunteers have joined our team including Dorota Zabawa, Sally Greenhaulgh, Jade Seymour, Abaynesh Canning and Sam Mclean.

We were also helped by work experience students Jack Wilkinson from Meadows and Tahir..... from Parkside School.

## Contents

Who are we?	2
The Chairman writes Graham Baxter	3
Your Voice Your Rights!	4-7
Fundraising	8
Statistics	9
Chesterfield	10-11
Amber Valley	11
Bolsover	12-13
N.E. Derbyshire	14
Case Studies	10-14
User Feedback Survey	15
Management Committee/ Where to get advice?	16

Front page photograph see page 6

# The Chairman writes...

**Derbyshire Unemployed Workers Centres' have been in existence since 1983 when Gordon Smith and Marian Brooks moved in to a small port-a-cabin on Shepley's Yard. Doug Herring joined them gaining use of the Goldwell Rooms on Ashgate Road. Since that time the Centres in Chesterfield have always operated out of port-a-cabins on Saltergate. The inadequate accommodation has always been countered by the friendliness of the welcome, the commitment of staff and volunteers and the quality of advice and representation offered.**

Next year will see a move to the basement of the Chesterfield Borough Council Town Hall. A move that will see the Centres share premises with the Chesterfield Law Centre, TRUST and links CVS.

The new premises will offer far better facilities for both the organisation and those wishing to access their services. Many people presently access the Law Centres services through the Unemployed Workers Centres. Our closer working arrangement will make that process much simpler.

The waiting room, if it can be

termed as such, at 70 Saltergate, is nothing short of a disgrace with people cramped into an entrance lobby. At the Town Hall we will have a proper waiting area offering people comfortable facilities until they can be seen. We will also be able to talk to people privately when they first enter the building in order to ascertain who they wish to see and make sure they are trying to access the right service.

It has taken a long time to find a central, affordable location in Chesterfield to bring about the goal of putting advice services



*Graham Baxter MBE, Leader of North East Derbyshire District Council.*

under one roof. Unfortunately it was not possible to include the Chesterfield CAB in this process but we will still be working closely with CABs across the County.

I would like to thank the volunteers and staff at DUWC's for the patience they have shown in waiting for better facilities and condition to work. Our services are under great strain and pressure, the people coming to us are often in desperate circumstances – a new place to work will not change that – but as Bas Barker one of our founders used to say – 'nothing is too good for the working class.' We will now, at long last, be giving people the facilities they deserve.

**Graham Baxter MBE**

## The Co-ordinator writes...

**It is with great pleasure that I can announce that Derbyshire County Council have taken the decision following the election in May 2013 to reinstall our grant. The two years we spent without their support were very difficult times.**

The grant aid will allow us to work better with the huge increase in demand for representation that has taken place recently. Back in 2008 we would have roughly 250 appeals tribunals waiting to be heard. At the end of September 2013 we had 1122 appeals tribunals pending. This is an increase of nearly 500%.

Appeals tribunals are times consuming and take our front line workers away from the office or outreach bases face to face enquires, putting a huge strain on our ability to keep our services open and accessible. The support from the County Council comes with the promise that we must not organise people into campaigns using Local Authority funding. We have never done this before

as we have always had separate fundraising in order to enable the Centres to campaign. However, in order to make it crystal clear to all. The DUWCs will no longer organise campaigns. That work will be taken on by the trade unions. The DUWCs will still give a voice to those who access our service. We will continue to conduct research and to work with the CABs on social policy work raising issues of both local and national concern.

The reinstatement of funding is a huge boost to the DUWCs and will enable us to continue to offer advice and representation into the future.

**Colin Hampton**



*Vicky-Ann Diouf, Deputy Mayoress presenting Colin Hampton with his long service award*

# Your Voice Your Rights!

## Fit for work? Why am I not working?

**The policy of governments to try and shift people from sickness benefits to Jobseekers Allowance or off benefits altogether has received a huge amount of media attention. In North Derbyshire we have witnessed two deaths, where families of the deceased have laid the blame on the policy which has consistently found people fit for work when medical advice has been ignored.**

The policy continues to blunder along with many claimants losing money and being placed on JSA that has conditions attached that many cannot fill as a result of their health condition. Supporters of the policy claim that getting people back to work is their aim as in the long run being at work is better for people's health.

Staff and volunteers at the DUWCs were concerned that anecdotal evidence from the result of our advice work, pointed to the fact that few people found fit for work were ever likely to get jobs. We decided to test this out by conducting research on those people who had come to us for advice and representation when challenging the decision that they were fit for work. Fifty people who had challenged the DWP decision but had lost at appeal were telephoned by volunteers and were asked a series of questions.

### The results confirmed our worst fears

- **Only one person was in fulltime work** at the times of the interview (all respondents had lost at appeal between 5 and 15 months before the telephone call). Only two had gained full time work in this time, with only the one being able to held down a fulltime job.

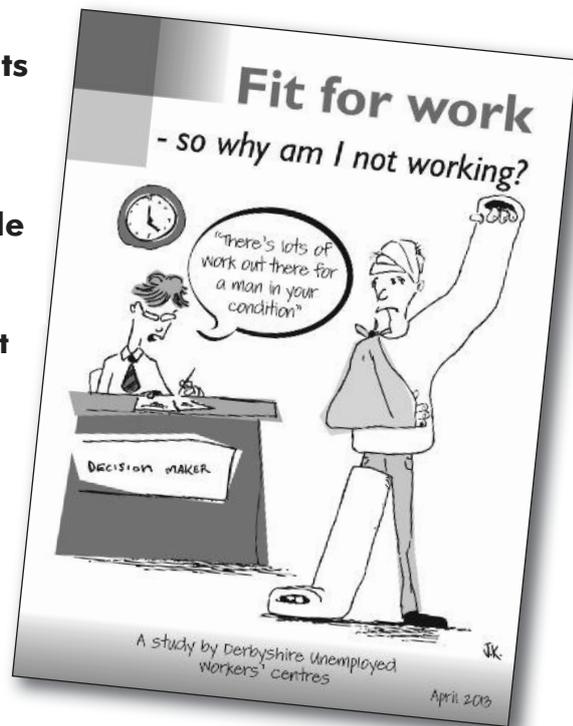
- **Nine people were in part time work** out of the fifty respondents
- **80% of the people were not in work when interviewed**
- **All 50 people** had experienced difficulties in finding work because of their health condition.
- **68% of respondents** thought that they would never work again.

Very few had moved over to JSA, but many had lost out financially, having to rely on their partners income or attempting to reclaim employment and support allowance.

As a result of our study we put forward a number of policy recommendations and we also highlighted case studies from our study that added weight to our call for a change of direction in the policy of governments.

### Raise the level of JSA to that of ESA

So that a test for fitness for work will not be confused with a measure to reduce the benefits bill at all costs. If the government genuinely believes that people are presenting themselves for the wrong benefit then they should incentivise them to do so.



### Penalties for getting it wrong

The private firm conducting the work capability assessment that forms part of the process for decision making around a person's claim for ESA, has come under increasing scrutiny. DUWCs conducts hundreds of appeals on ESA each year and has a success rate of over 70%. Nationally the success rate of appeals is just over 30% with many not being able to access representation and not attending in person. This is still a massive failure rate and an indictment of the process. The private firm receives million of pounds from the public purse and has been rewarded with a further contract with regards to the new assessment of the Personal Independence Payment. There is no penalty for continually getting it wrong. In fact the opposite is the case - claimants face loss of

benefits while multinational firms are rewarded with more business despite the devastating affects that their inadequate reports have on decision making.

## Increase the demand for Labour

Many of the people found fit for work in North Derbyshire will never work again unless there is a massive change in the Labour Market. Those who feel able and would like to work site two major obstacles. Firstly, the lack of appropriate work for people with health limiting conditions. Secondly, the perceived discrimination by employers towards those with health problems, particularly those with a history of mental health issues. Surely the test for whether someone is 'fit for work' should be measured by looking at the job outcomes of those deemed to be no longer entitled to ESA. Saying 'there are loads of jobs out there ' is not going to make people more employable in an economy where there are many fit people to choose from and the requirement for people to be ever more flexible at work.

## Help and support for those with health limiting conditions

Getting people back to worth is going to require government intervention. The system at the moment either 'parks' those difficult to place or penalises them by driving them off benefits all together. If the government really wants to get people closer to the Labour market it needs to start with individually tailored help and support along with a simultaneous boost in demand for labour.

# Food Banks

**The DUWCs have now been operating for thirty years. In that time we have dealt with the many redundancies that have taken place in our traditional industries.**

We have had to help and advise people through the complexities and regard of changes to the benefits system. For those in the organisation, that have worked throughout these turbulent times it is distressing that all at the Centres agree that these are the worst times for anyone out of work and needing to access state benefits.

The movement towards an increasingly punitive benefits system has long been documented in the Centre's Annual Report and studies. The harsher regime has come about despite no real growth in the availability of work. Where there has been growth in the jobs market it has been in the zero hours, casual, part time, temporary positions with

agencies taking a cut from the low wages. Work is precarious, and for many, does not lift them out of poverty.

It is hardly surprising that we are now inundated with requests for food vouchers. The majority that are issued in the Chesterfield office are in relation to JSA sanctions and delays in the receipt of benefits. This is both a local and a national scandal.

Whereas the provision of charity for those without food is to be welcomed in the short term, it is disturbing that there seems to be little movement to make them unnecessary. In fact some in positions of power seem comfortable that this is a move towards the provision of support for the future. There is little dignity in having to ask for a referral to a foodbank.

It is distressing for both those issuing and those receiving. We will continue to monitor the situation and feed into local discussions around this issue.



*With Jobseekers Allowance sanctions and benefit delays many people are having to resort to begging for charity.*

# Your Voice Your Rights!

## Look after the pennies and the pounds will look after themselves

**Age Concern (Chesterfield), DUWC, CABs and the Law Centre and Credit Union have come together to carry out a three year project. Launched in April 2013 the organisations will reach out to older people to help them access advice services. Funded by Comic Relief, a team of volunteers has been trained to speak to older people in a number of different settings in order to refer people where appropriate to the relevant advice organisation for help, advice and support.**

Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centre will help with maximising income and people will be able to access money and savings advice from the Chesterfield Credit Union. The project will



*The launch of the Pennies and pounds project. Volunteers hand out chocolate money at the Chesterfield Post Office.*

also focus on raising awareness of the many scams targeted at older people. Help will come from the CABs to ensure that people are getting the best deals when it comes to gas and electricity.

Three volunteers have come forward from the DUWCs. It is hoped that by using peer group

volunteers we will reach people who otherwise would not have sought advice

The pennies and pounds project was launched outside Chesterfield post office where volunteers handed out chocolate money to older people raising awareness of the help about to be made available.

## Community Spirit

Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres won this year's Derbyshire Times Community Spirit Award following nominations from members of the public. Justine Bark, Andrew Parkes and Colin Hampton accepted the Award at a ceremony held at the Chesterfield Football Club PROACT stadium. The fact that the organisation is held in such esteem by the people who use

our services is a great boost to staff and volunteers. There can hardly be a family in North and East Derbyshire that hasn't been touched by redundancy, unemployment and problems with the statutory organisations responsible for benefits and tax credits. Many of them have accessed our advice, support and representation. No one knows when illness might strike or jobs



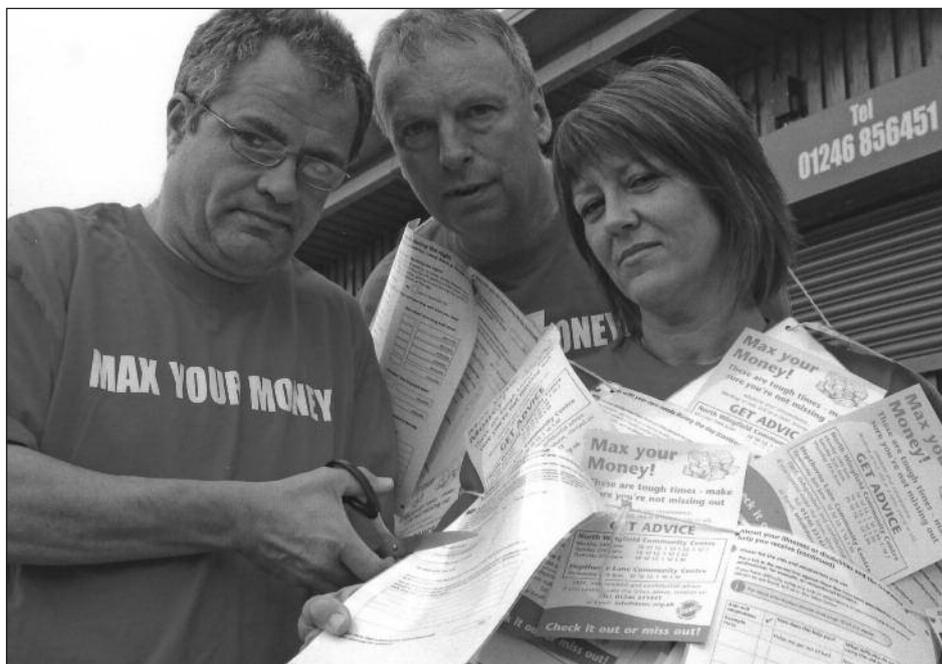
*Andrew Parkes, Colin Hampton & Justine Bark collect the award on behalf of DUWCs'*

come under threat. It is at these times that the community sector is most needed and why it is so valued by the people of Derbyshire.

## These are difficult times

**These are difficult times, without doubt, for thousands of people throughout Derbyshire. Whilst many this Winter are having to make a choice between heating and eating millions of pounds go unclaimed in benefits and tax credits.**

Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres have a long record of proactively reaching out to people and communities, urging them to seek advice and check their entitlements. In recent years, for ease of administrative efficiency more and more people have been encouraged to use telephone and the internet to both access services, benefits and also advice. However, many of the people who we engage with would be unlikely to utilise these methods of contact for a whole host of reasons. DUWCs continue to offer face to face sessions throughout our catchment area and still find that word of mouth is the most effective



Nicolo Ferrera, Colin Hampton and Dawn Raybould launching the 'Max your Money' campaign at North Wingfield Community Centre.

means of encouraging people to come forward for support.

### Under-claiming

Under-claiming of benefits and credits is not just an issue for those not working, with means testing and the fear of overpayments putting off many

people in work. In our take-up campaigns over the coming months we will be focussing on those currently working whilst not ignoring the plight of those facing the impact of austerity measures and rising costs. Our message to the people of Derbyshire is 'MAX YOUR MONEY'.

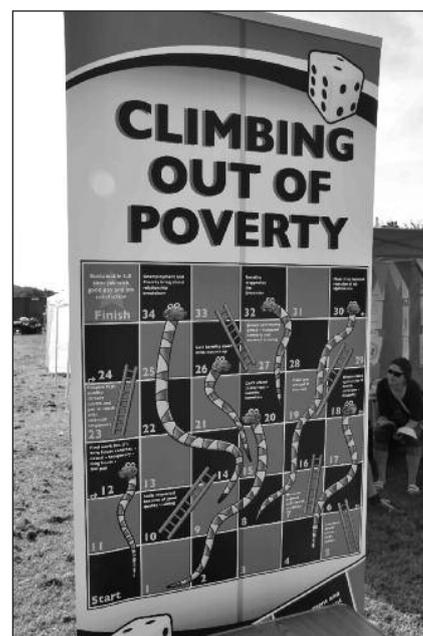
## Climbing out of poverty

### Snakes on Tour

Own hugely successful Snakes and Ladders Climbing out of poverty game and exhibition has been seen all over Derbyshire through 2013. Volunteers have transported the game to schools, galas and festival helping to raise awareness of the difficulties people face in trying to climb out of poverty.

The lifesize game following the popular board game shows the

many pitfalls that people encounter when trying to get a full time job with decent pay and job satisfaction. It also contains the ladders raising awareness of where help is available. Our snakes and ladders exhibition has this year been seen at Derby Silk Mill, Chain Makers Festival, Hazards Conference, Party in the (Queens) Park, Rhubarb Farm Langwith, Clowne Festival September 14th and Tupton Lock Festival.



## Our Funders 2013

- Chesterfield Borough Council
- North East Derbyshire District Council
- Bolsover District Council
- Derbyshire County Council

### Parish and Town Councils:

- Alfreton Town Council
- Brimington Parish Council
- Clay Cross Parish Council
- Clowne Parish Council
- Eckington Parish Council
- Grassmoor Parish Council
- Heanor and Loscoe Town Council
- North Wingfield Parish Council
- Pinxton Parish Council
- Pleasley Parish Council
- Somercotes Parish Council
- Staveley Town Council
- Unstone Parish Council
- Warsop Parish Council

### Grants and Donations

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



*Pictured above Colin Hampton speaking at the Volunteer Centre Awards night.*

### Small Grants and Donations

- Anonymous Charitable Trusts
- Graysons Solicitors

As well as all our funders in local authorities, town and parish councils, people who have been helped by the DUWCs have donated

**£5382.65**

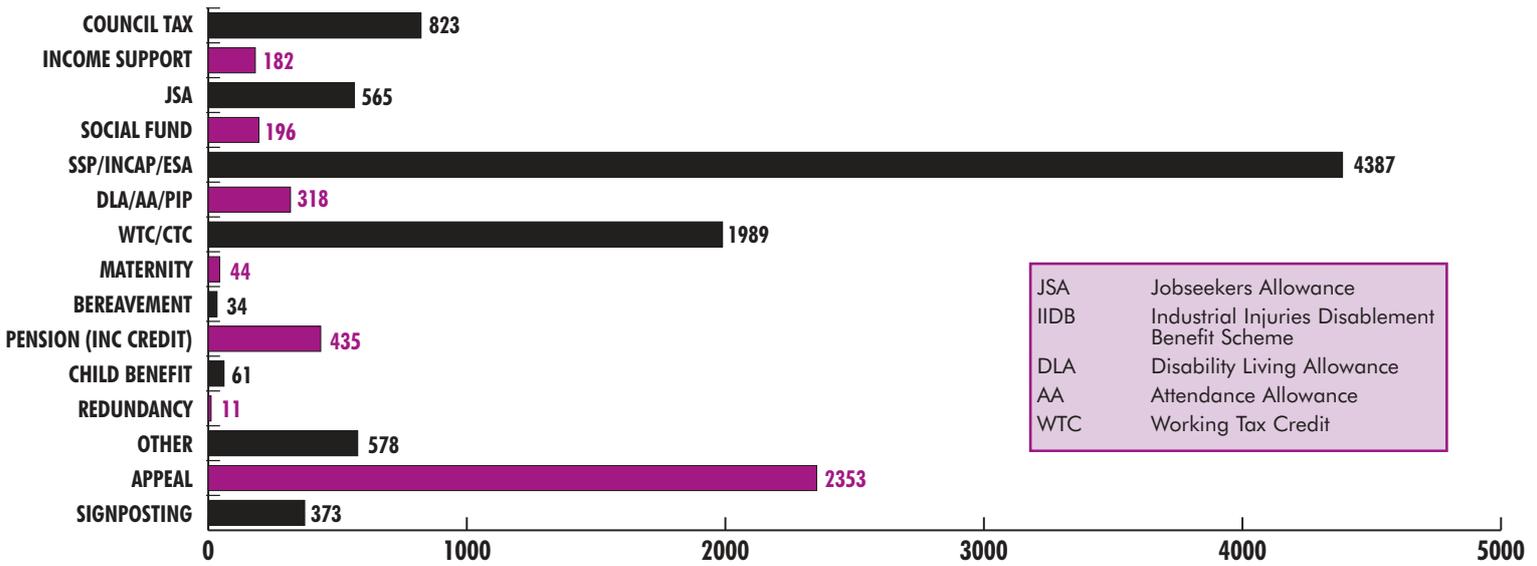
during the year.

*We thank them for their fantastic support many of whom will be amongst the least wealthy in Derbyshire*



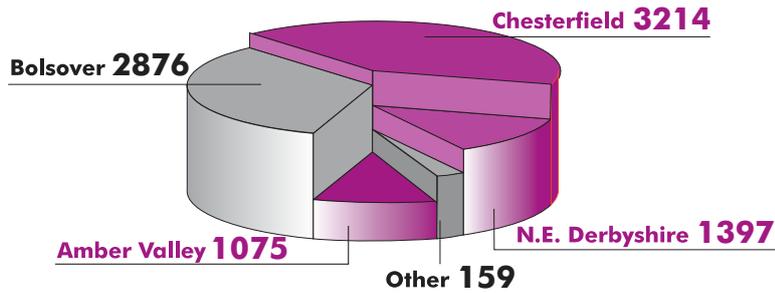
# Statistics

## ENQUIRY TOTALS 2012/2013

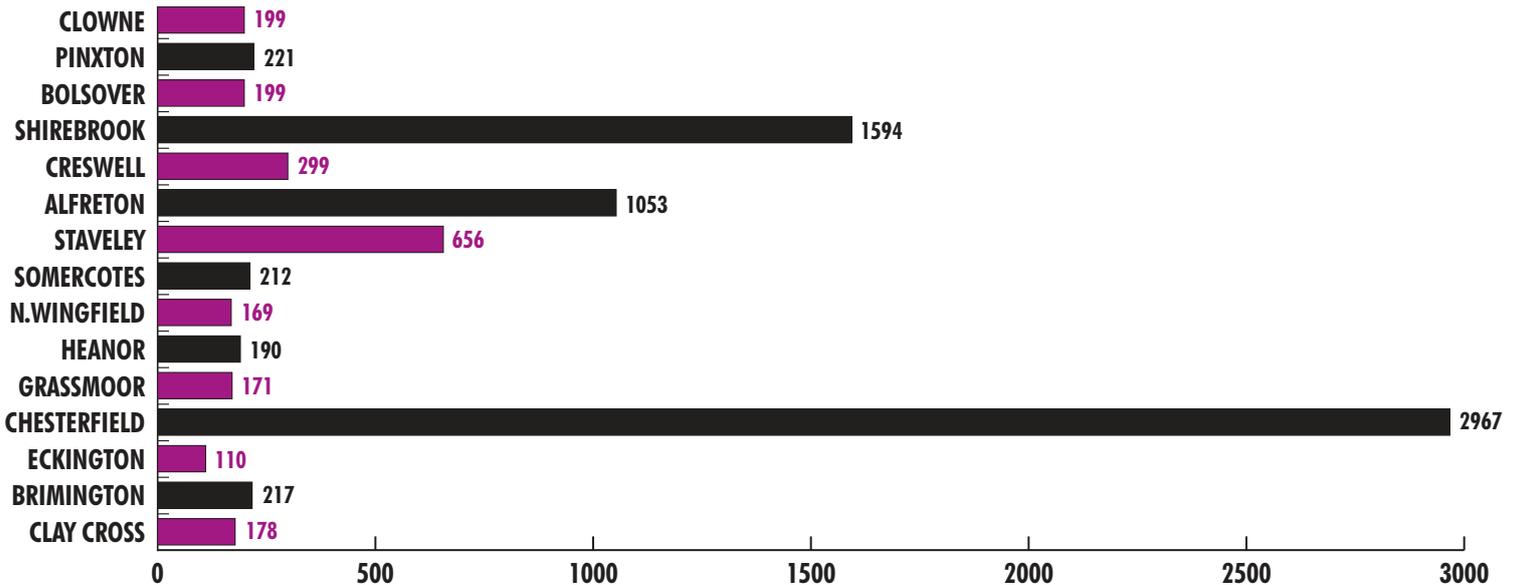


JSA Jobseekers Allowance  
 IIDB Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit Scheme  
 DLA Disability Living Allowance  
 AA Attendance Allowance  
 WTC Working Tax Credit

## ORIGIN OF ENQUIRIES



## VENUE CALLER TOTALS 2012/2013



### HOURS PER WEEK OPEN

Chesterfield	17½	Clay Cross, Brimington	3
Alfreton	15	Clowne, Pinxton, Bolsover, Creswell, Somercotes, North Wingfield	2½
Shirebrook	10	Grassmoor, Eckington	2
Staveley	6		
Heanor	4		

Appeals	624
Home Visits	29
Telephone enquiries/email	840
Callers	7228
Total	8721

# Around the area

## Chesterfield



The Chesterfield Unemployed Workers' Centre set up in April 1983 for the first time in its own premises on Shepleys Yard. Over thirty years ago Gordon Smith and Marian Brooks stepped into the port-a-cabin to open the Centre for the Unemployed. All they had was a desk and chairs and they had to beg the money for a kettle from the Trades Council. Despite the humble surroundings, Gordon, Marian and Doug Herring quickly built a sound reputation for the organisation, offering advice and representation as well as education and training courses plus furniture recycling. The three staff were on a time limited government training scheme, the community programme, and had to move on after one year. In January 1985, during the miners strike, Colin Hampton was appointed co-ordinator and shortly after was joined by Marian Brooks who had reapplied for the job when Josie Stimpson left. Marian Brooks took over the advice role and continued the fine reputation that together she had built with Gordon Smith.

**A** man from Hasland was made unwell whilst attending an ATOS Work Capability Assessment (WCA). The worker carrying out the assessment offered to phone for an ambulance. He subsequently found him fit for work despite his degenerative spine condition, his problems with his heart and nervous system. The man has been in and out of hospital since his assessment and is awaiting his appeal which will take place shortly before his 65th birthday. DUWC's has been supporting him through this ordeal and has alerted his MP to the situation. Two people have died through the pressure placed on them through the WCA process and we are concerned that the lessons from these horrific cases have not been learned.

***"Just wanted to thank you for all the help & support you have given me with regard to my ESA appeal. Thanks to your help I won the tribunal hearing and I am very grateful."***  
**Sue, Staveley**

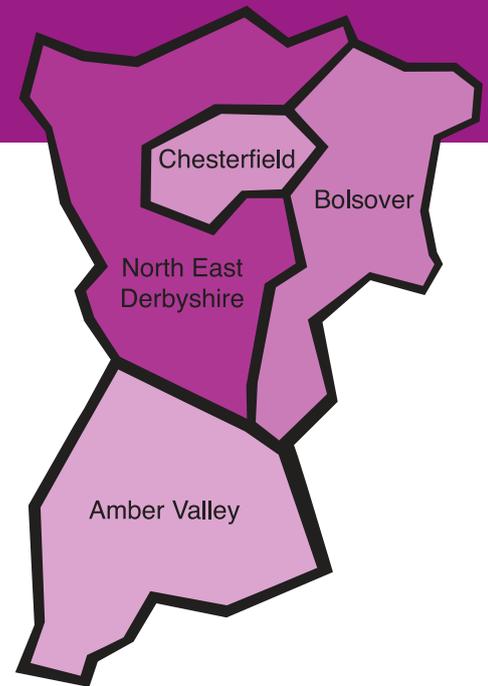
## Expansion

The Centre began to expand with full-time staff being taken on. New premises, another port-a-cabin, at 54 Saltergate, were acquired.

Derbyshire Country Council, North East Derbyshire District Council, Bolsover District Council and Amber Valley Borough Council all gave grant aid to the organisation which was well known throughout the region and the country for the advice and representation work as well as in its role of giving a voice to the concerns of those who accessed its services.

The pressure on Local Authority finance meant grant cuts and with

***"Thank you so very much for your time, your empathy, compassion and selfless help you have given me with my appeal. Thank you."***  
**J.F. Chesterfield**



the port-a-cabin at 54 becoming ever more dilapidated the DUWC moved into yet another port-a-cabin, much smaller, at 70 Saltergate.

## Chesterfield Borough Council

At long last, with the demand for advice services going through the roof, Chesterfield Borough Council is bringing about a move for DUWC, The Law Centre, TRUST and links CVS, to the basement of the town hall. At long last the Centres' staff and volunteers will be in bricks and mortar and the people who visit us will have a decent waiting area. It has long been the vision of the Council to put advice services under the same roof for the benefit of the people the town. In March Next Year this will become a reality.

In Chesterfield this year we have been supported by many volunteers, Jim Milles, Jane Marriott, Esther Fisher, Dorota Zabawe, Abaynesh Canning, Jade Seymour, Andrena Jenkinson and Gemma ... Former volunteers Justine Bark and Paul Marklew have joined the paid staff this year. It is a fantastic team effort that keeps the organisation going through all the welfare changes and the difficulties which this brings.

***"A short note to say a big THANK YOU for all your help, expert guidance and your patience. We are pleased to tell you our daughter has now got ESA and DLA the latter gained entirely to you. After all the traumas of the past few months we can now look forward again. Thank you so much."***

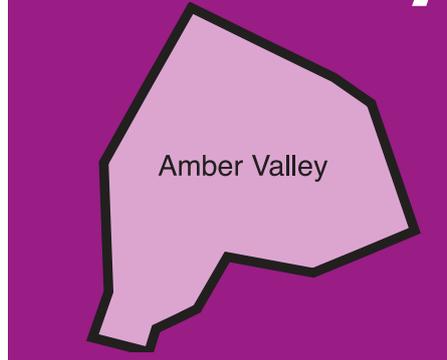
***Mr and Mrs. B., Brimington***

In Brimington, we continue to receive fantastic support from the Parish Council which helps provide a Monday morning service at the Community Centre of Course we see many Brimington residents at our Chesterfield office but having an advice worker on the doorstep is great assistance for those who would otherwise have difficulties accessing the service.

It has been a difficult year in Staveley. April saw the end of our occupancy of Learning Matters on High St when the Colleges' lease on the building came to an end. Staveley Town Council came to our rescue offering the use of a room at Staveley Hall. The end of financial support from the Coalfields Neighbourhoods Funding meant that we have had to cut back the hours. It is hoped with continued support from Chesterfield Borough Council and Staveley Town Council we will be able to move back to the former High St premises next year.

***"Thank you for your help in fighting the JSA sanction, but especially for going to my tribunal while I have been ill – and WINNING!!"***  
***C.M., Hasland***

## Amber Valley



With the support of Alfreton Town, Somercotes Parish Council and Heanor Town Council we have managed to maintain a service in Amber Valley throughout 2013. Heanor Salcare has been the biggest single contributor with the organisation perusing funders to buy in our services to their Ray St offices. We are humbled by their continued support to provide face to face advice and representation services in the area. Glynn Power, John Bradley and Laura Marshall have provided the help and support.

Our base in Amber Valley is at our High St office in Alfreton House. The busy office is central to the town and receives many callers from the surrounding area including people from Tibshelf, South Normanton Shirland, Stonebroom and Mickley which are outside the Borough.

We would, of course, do much more if the Borough council was to give its support. Unfortunately the council has refused to reinstate

***A*** woman from Alfreton with Seropositive rheumatoid arthritis had her DLA stopped, GL24 appeal form completed asking for decision to be looked at again, decision overturned without appeal, awarded High Rate Mobility, (£55.25 weekly) Low rate care (£21 weekly) for 2 years.

***E***X miner from Somercotes unforeseen aggravation for Ostio-Arthritis of knees and VWF, claimed IIDB, awarded 14% for knees £31.62 per week for life and £60.12 per week reduced earnings allowance for Vibration white finger after winning his appeal.

grant aid for over ten years. Our supporters have done a wonderful job in helping to maintain our presence.

***"I would just like to thank you and show my appreciation for all the support, guidance and hard work you have done for me. I would not have known what to do without your help, and would recommend your service to anyone who needs it. Thank you once again."***  
***Mr. S. Alfreton***

***A*** man from Heanor with severe learning disabilities had ESA stopped as he did not attend medical due to not understanding and not being able to get there, GL24 appeal form completed asking for decision to be looked at again, decision overturned, ESA awarded (Support Group rate £106.50 weekly)

Both The Law Centre and the CAB have continued to use our premises for appointments around employment Law and debt management Somercotes Parish Hall continues to be well used and the Monday afternoon sessions often see queues forming. DUWC will continue to try to provide a top class service in the borough despite the difficulties in coping with the demand.

# Around the area

## Bolsover District



As 2013 draws to a close the chill of austerity continues to blow through the communities of the Bolsover District. For benefit claimants throughout the area the chill of welfare austerity is biting very deep indeed.

Many local residents had been bracing themselves for the benefit change onslaught that began in April; fearing the worse aspects of the Government's Welfare Reform Act. New changes were joined by some past ones returning to have another bite at those already living on meager incomes. A 1% cap for three years on annual benefit increases; the Benefit Cap - affecting some 55,000 larger families nationally; the 'Bedroom Tax', this change expected to affect 660,000 families in socially rented housing who are deemed to have one or more spare bedrooms. This particular change to housing benefit will mean families receiving less benefit and having to make up the difference from other sources (usually other entitlements).

### Sickness Benefits

Many frustrated sickness benefits claimants in the local area have visited our advice venues, as they

realise that the migration from Incapacity Benefit to Employment and Support Allowance, has a disguised twelve month limit on contributory benefit paid to them under the old benefit rules. Some may have received this entitlement for a number of years, and the shock of losing it has turned to anger. Those affected find themselves well out of pocket and being unable to claim means tested ESA because of other household income. Throughout 2013 we have been inundated with enquiries from those claimants that on migration were placed in ESA's Work Related Group, being told by Job Centre Adviser's that they should have

been put in the Support group; thus not having to engage in any work related activity. We have tried our best to help some of these people by assisting with appeals. We have taken the matter up with Department of Work and Pensions Managers at Welfare liaison meetings, but little has been done to rectify the problem.

### Welfare Reform Act

As the Welfare Reform Act abolished Council Tax Benefit, Disability Living Allowance, parts of the Discretionary Social Fund (Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants); April brought forth their replacements. Council Tax Support

A Clowne man came to our out reach venue for help sorting out his tax credits. He had taken on main responsibility for his three young children 6 months previously. He worked part time and had claimed child benefit and working tax credits. The problem was that he had been unable to sort out his child tax credits award despite providing all documented evidence required and numerous phone calls he had still not received a penny. Because he had three children to bring up he was finding the lack of extra finance a struggle; and as he stated he was trying to work and bring up his children; all he required was a little extra help.

He had been told different reasons for the failure to sort his claim; including it being alleged that he was not the main carer and that someone else was claiming child tax credits for his children. This added to the problems and burdened him with additional paperwork. The last person he spoke to at the tax credit office told him that his complaint had been escalated for the second time; WHAT! He was at the end of his tether.

We listened carefully and decided to speak to the organ grinders. We rang the Adviser Line used by our advisers on a regular basis; they do have a more detailed knowledge of the tax credits system and do sometimes have the means to sort out the most difficult cases.

We rang and spoke to a very friendly adviser who asked a couple of questions including did the man receive child benefit (silence whilst she sourced the child benefit data base for confirmation) and what are the dates of birth of his children. A matter of seconds later he said that he had updated the claim and that arrears of tax credits and weekly payments should reach his account within the next 5 to 7 days. The man was gobsmacked and could not believe it; he left with a large smile across his face and was very grateful. He said that a friend had been encouraging him to call in and see us for weeks; he wished he had called much earlier.

will allow the government to extract council tax from those who would have been entitled to full support in the old scheme. Personal Independence Payment (PIP) will continue to support those who have medical conditions and struggle to mobilise and self caring. The main change is that many current DLA claimants will not qualify for PIP, and will fall foul of the ESA type assessments carried out by the same organisation which has brought so much misery to many sickness benefit claimants. The Derbyshire Discretionary Fund allows Derbyshire County Council to provide 'Emergency cash payments' and grants for particular household items. With a smaller budget there will be much more scrutiny over who will qualify for help.

## Appeals

At our Shirebrook office and the numerous outreach venues throughout Bolsover we continue to experience high demand for our service, especially those wishing to appeal benefit decisions. Our team of staff and volunteers are meeting this challenge and working hard to ensure that we deliver a first class service under difficult circumstances. In the spring we moved our Bolsover outreach venue from the Community Voluntary Partners (CVP) at Kitchen Croft, to join the Citizens Advice Bureau at Bainbridge Hall in Carr Vale. This continues to be a Monday afternoon session with a time change; 1.30 pm to 4.00 pm. Since the move we have experienced a similar level of interest by local people wishing to access our advice provision; many having been signposted by Bolsover Job Centre. This highlights the fact that our service is both valued and trusted within the community. We would be unable to continue meeting the increase in demand

A woman from Bolsover visited our outreach venue clutching letters sent to her from the Department of Works and Pensions and the Debt Recovery section in Gloucestershire.

In tears, she explained that she had been in receipt of income support for a number of years. She had been asked to fill in an A1 review form following a change of address. She had then opened the letters to find that her income support had been stopped and that the DWP were seeking to recover an overpayment of benefit in excess of £15,000. After interviewing the woman it became clear that she had inherited a significant amount of money from a relative which amounted to well over £42,000. The decision to stop her benefit stated that she has failed to disclose a material fact that she had a capital amount which would affect her entitlement to benefit.

Initially it did not look good for this woman. Despite her having longstanding mental health problems and finding it very difficult deal with her own affairs the case against her did look strong. We decided to help her appeal which did halt any moves to recover the overpayment. We were very concerned about the woman because she appeared to find it very difficult understanding what was happening to her. She indicated that her parents looked after her financial affairs with her not really knowing what money she had in her bank account (her father filled in all her forms for her) we asked her to come back to see us soon and to bring her father with her.

Two weeks later she came in with her father and had in her possession a letter from the DWP, that they had received her appeal and that they were reconsidering their decision. After interviewing the woman's father it became clear that she had learning difficulties and had no real understanding or control over her finances. She had no knowledge( at any time prior to the decision to stop her benefit) that she had received the inheritance. Eureka! We had our chance to try and overturn the decision.

Because she did not know she had received the capital amount then she could not have failed to disclose a material fact to the DWP. We put together a detailed letter to the relevant section asking them to reconsider in the light of the new evidence; we provide documented evidence and statements from the woman's parents. Two weeks later we received correspondence from the DWP, stating that they had revised their earlier decision in favour of the woman; this was a great result and a lesson in persistence by everyone involved.

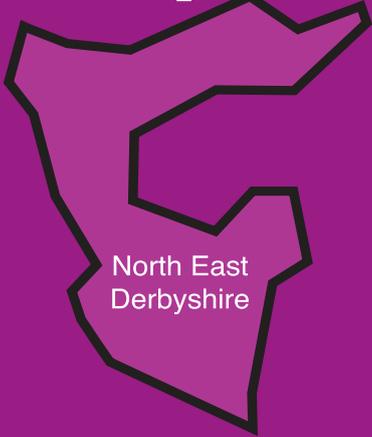
without the help of our fantastic group of staff and volunteers. Gill, Cindy, Allison, Karen, Paul and Glynn give their time and effort week in and week out, to make sure we can continue to provide the best service possible to the residents of the Bolsover District.

As we look to 2014 and beyond, we are aware of the changes to the

welfare benefits system which will mean many new and difficult challenges for our organisation. In the future local people will experience an increasingly harsh claiming regime with conditionality being at the heart of the system. We will continue to campaign in the future against any measures which impoverish people further.

# Around the area

## North East Derbyshire



### Max Your Money

With the support of North East Derbyshire District Council and Rykneld Homes we are conducting a 'Max your Money' series of benefits and tax credits take up campaigns in some of the most deprived areas in the district. The aim is to make sure people are claiming all that money to which they are entitled. Benefit fraud and stories of people thought of as 'undeserving' serve to put off many people from claiming benefit and tax credits which may

**M**rs. H from Danesmoor aged 56 recently lost her husband. We made a claim for Bereavement Allowance and told her that because of her age she would be entitled to the full amount of £108.30pw. Her son suffers with severe OCD and depression for which we helped him to receive DLA paid at low rate mobility £21pw and high rate care at £79.15pw. Because her son was in receipt of DLA at more than middle rate care she was also entitled to claim Carers Allowance. New claim made, now in receipt of CA at £59.75pw.

***"Just a few words to express my gratitude for the help you gave me when I felt so helpless against the system, your help won the case for me."***  
**C.B, North Wingfield**

vastly improve their financial situation and help lift them out of poverty.

The amount going unclaimed dwarfs that amount lost through benefit fraud but little is done by central government to address the issue of under claiming. In fact over the years, the complexity of the claiming process has been a barrier to many. The present government is making efforts to simplify the number of benefits but the drive to make everyone claim on-line is likely to be a stumbling block for the most vulnerable.

### Throughout the district

Our campaign in North East Derbyshire began in North Wingfield/ Hephthorne Lane and went on in to Grassmoor. Holmewood and Heath are next to be followed in the new year by Clay Cross, Eckington, Shirland, Stonebroom and Mickley.

As well as 'Max your Money' we are continuing to staff our advice sessions across the district with many accessing our services on their visit to Chesterfield, Katrina Hudson and Glynn Power have taken on the bulk of the responsibility for advice and representation in North East Derbyshire, assisted by own capable team of volunteers.

***"Thanks to all the staff in my time of need. Keep up all the good work."***  
**A.S, Eckington**

**A** couple in their 50's came in for advice at North Wingfield.

They came in with a particular problem relating to Employment and Support Allowance which we were able to resolve within 20 minutes. Whilst dealing with the ESA issue we suggested a benefit check to see if there were any other entitlements to be had, increasing their income.

The woman was in receipt of ESA and appealing against a decision to place her in the work related activity group. She had numerous medical conditions so was claiming Disability Living Allowance; she revealed that 6 months ago she was awarded the middle rate of the care component, she had previously been in receipt of the lowest rate of care. We identified that her partner was able to claim Carers Allowance for looking after her, and could have been entitled from the beginning of the award.

The couple could not claim any means-tested benefits because of the high level of savings and private pension income. In the past they had been told they could not claim any other benefits because of their savings. They were surprised a little annoyed but glad that they had decided to take advantage of our take up day. This case proves the value of such take up events within the local communities, as income maximization can benefit not just individuals but many more in the community.

# User Feedback Survey 2013

117 people completed the user survey in the weeks dedicated to this feedback process. The average waiting time was 17 minutes, an improvement from last year.

Word of mouth, usually from friends and neighbours is still by far the most popular way that people come to seek advice from us. 65% come through this route. A further 15% said that they had used our services before. The rest (15%) are made up of referrals from CABs, Law Centre, Job Centre, Local Authority and other agencies. 5% come to us from the signage outside offices and outreach. Everyone would recommend us to someone else with regards to using our services.

88% were 'very happy' with the service and 12% 'satisfied'. One person was upset by others in

the waiting room. Otherwise, supportive comments include:

*'This is a worthwhile Advice Centre – would be lost without it.'*

*'This service is vital to those who have difficulty with the benefits procedure and forms. It should be supported for as long as possible, to help prevent more people from suffering illness.'*

*'Thank God for the support and advice from this organisation. I feel so overwhelmed by the benefit system. They approach things methodically.'*

*'I think the DUWC are blessing to all of the people they see. They make you feel welcome and that you are not alone or defeated.'*

*'I am always very impressed by the staff of DUWC who are impeccably informed and always polite and fully able to assess situations and investigate problems and resolutions.'*

Type of Appeal Oct 1st 2011 - Sept 30th 2012	Completed	Pending
Incapacity Benefit & Employment Support Allowance	479	757
Disability Allowance & Attendance Allowance	121	180
Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (see note 1)	6	18
Job seeker's Allowance	10	93
Income Support (sickness related & overpayments)	4	41
Tax Credits	1	18
Housing Benefit & Council Tax Benefit	1	5
Other	2	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>624</b>	<b>1122</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>£729,177</b>
<b>Ongoing Weekly Benefits p.a.:</b>	<b>£1,190,540</b>

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 £3,090,167 has been won through our advice and representation and at appeals.**

# Management Committee 2013/2014

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

Barry Johnson  
(Chesterfield & District TUC)

## Treasurer

Ian Rutledge (co-optee)

## Chesterfield Borough Council

Councillor Amanda Serjeant

## Alfreton Town Council

Steve Marshall-Clarke  
Mary Kerry

## Bolsover District Council

Councillor Ann Syrett

## Chesterfield & District Trades Union Council

John Knight and  
Roger Davenport

## Derbyshire Association of Trades Union Councils

Shay Boyle

## Members

John Gilbert, Angela Manfredi,  
Keith O'Neill, Angela Webster,  
Elaine Tidd, Caroline Randall,  
Nicolo Ferrera, Hilary Cave,  
Michelle Askew, Allison Hallam

## Co-optees

Dave Marriott (PCS)  
Reuben Redhead (ACCA)  
Sarah Roy (Law Centre)

## Centre Staff 2013

Colin Hampton - Co-ordinator  
Andy Parkes - Assistant  
Co-ordinator/Welfare Rights Advisor  
Lynn Bagshaw - Administrator  
Tim Wilkinson - Welfare Rights  
Katrina Hudson - Welfare Rights  
John Bradley - Welfare Rights  
Glynn Power - Welfare Rights  
Justine Bark - Welfare Rights  
Paul Marklew - Welfare Rights

## WHERE TO GET ADVICE

### Chesterfield & North East Derbyshire

70 Saltergate, Chesterfield S40 1JR  
Tel 01246 231441/Fax 01246 551529  
Email: [info@duwc.org.uk](mailto:info@duwc.org.uk)  
Monday - Friday 9am - 12.30pm

**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 Hall  
Mondays & Wednesdays 9.00am - 12 noon

### 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

**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, North East Derbyshire District Council, Derbyshire County Council, Brimington Parish Council, Alfreton Town Council, Somercotes Parish Council, and many town and parish councils across Derbyshire, Salcare Heanor, as well as contributions raised through the One Fund For All.