Your voice
DUWC
Your rights

Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres
Annual Report 2026

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Our Mission

Advice, support and representation are the main tasks of the DUWC alongside campaigning for full employment and dignity for those that cannot work. We have never drifted away from these core objectives that are still as strong today as when they were established by the Trade Unions and representatives of Chesterfield Borough Council back in the 1980s.

From humble beginnings

In April 1983, Gordon Smith stepped into the small Portakabin on Shepley's yard (where MyDentist is now) on the doughnut roundabout in Chesterfield. The Unemployed Workers Centre had its own building for the first time. They were very humble beginnings. All that was in the building was a desk and a couple of chairs. Gordon had to secure a donation from the Trades Council for a kettle and mugs. Gordon, alongside Marian Brooks and Doug Herring, soon grew the organisation into one that had great respect within the local community.

Front cover: TUC General Secretary Paul Nowak with representatives of UWCs at the Brighton Conference. Photo credit Jess Hurd.

The organisation now works in Amber Valley, Bolsover, North East Derbyshire as well as Chesterfield.

How are we funded?

The Centres are funded by Bolsover District Council, North East Derbyshire District Council and Amber Valley Borough Council and many Town and Parish Councils. Other funders include the National Lottery Community Fund as well as Charitable Trusts and local and national fund giving bodies. Many local people donate to DUWC, making sure that the organisation is here for them and for others.

Staff and volunteers

We have recruited many new volunteers this year. Claire Eaton, Mark Sparshatt, Shangin Hussien, Martin Rutter, Eileen Cunningham, Daisy Roberts, and Natalia Panek-Piasecka. They join our established team including Eva Cermacova, Ann Lambert, Andy King, Bozena Marvill, David Eccles and many more. We have worked with Parkside School and Sheffield Hallam University in taking work experience students.

Two members of staff have moved on to pastures new. Alicja Zon is working in London as a civilian

Andy Parkes training new volunteers

for the Ministry of Defence in family support. Joanne Johnson has accepted a position with the Derbyshire County Council. We wish them both well. Both started as volunteers with DUWC.

Tim Wilkinson retired early this year after many years' service, first as a volunteer and then as a staff member. He will be sorely missed for both his work and his contribution the mentoring of volunteers.

If you are interested in volunteering with DUWC please contact Esther Fisher via esther.fisher@duwc.org.uk or 01246 231441

The Chairman writes

Graham Baxter MBE, Chairman of DUWC's Trustees

Not for the first time in my comments in the DUWC annual report, I want to praise the staff and volunteers. The perilous funding environment facing the voluntary and community sector have impacted on the service we can offer. The Trustees had to take measures to cut costs. Redundancies were needed, without which DUWC would soon be facing the problem of office closures. One voluntary redundancy was granted, but more needed. Unselfishly, the staff agreed to communally reduce their hours in order to protect jobs. This was a wonderful gesture of solidarity that goes to the very heart of why DUWC exists.

The downside of the reduction in hours has been that we have had to close our Chesterfield headquarters on Fridays to casual callers. We have also had to close our Staveley and Hasland outreach sessions. The situation would've been far worse had the Trustees not acted when they did.

Having cut costs, we hope to have steadied the ship. However, there are many problems queuing up further down the line. Local Government reorganisation might post difficulties but this in the hands of the Government. We will know more next May.

DUWC has to rely on charitable support and grant giving organisations. These are always project orientated and time limited. In order for DUWC to survive, we must have many projects live at any one time and many more in the pipeline. This is a very competitive area and funders' objectives do not always correspond with ours.

One thing is for sure, all at DUWC, the trustees, staff, volunteers and supporters, will do their upmost to keep providing our services that have supported so many people since the early 1980s.

Unemployment, especially amongst the young, means that our organisation will be needed into the foreseeable future. Threats are constantly being made by politicians to take away social security for many people for whom work is not immediately possible. Without our support it is painful to think about what might happen if these threats become reality. DUWC will continue to give a voice to the concerns of those affected.

The Co-ordinator writes

2026 has seen two staff members and a much valued volunteer leave the organisation, two retiring and the other on to pastures new.

Tim Wilkinson, took voluntary redundancy and retired back in March after 16 years' service, although he began back in 2008 as a volunteer. Tim is well respected by the many people who have sought his help and advice both from our Chesterfield office, and from the Brimington Community Centre Outreach where he worked for many years. He has helped train up dozens of volunteers over the years with his friendly manner and recognition that all volunteers need support to progress in the job. Tim was always keen to join in and work on our campaigns as well as bringing his unique humour to the daily life of DUWC.

We hope he will come back and volunteer for us, but, if not, wish him a long and happy retirement.

Allison Jarvis has took the decision to call it a day with us after 18 years' service. She is a truly caring person and has been key to our successes in making our Shirebrook office so well used by the local community. We all wish her well for the future.

Colin Hampton

Alicja Zon has left the organisation taking up a civilian job in the Armed Forces advising and supporting serving families. She started as a volunteer whilst still a student during the Covid pandemic. After gaining her degree and a masters degree, she applied for the role of administrator with our Help is Here project, as well as joining our advice team. Alicja gave great commitment to our cause, and brought with her a wide range of skills, displaying a reassuring manner to the many, worried, and anxious people who contact the service.

Hopefully, once she settled in her new job, she will be able to continue to give support to DUWC in a new capacity.

Esther – supporting our volunteers!

Wow! Another year gone so fast at DUWC! Well it's been an interesting year for volunteering, we have said hello to a few new faces and goodbye to some more, but continue to see more volunteers interested in working with our fantastic organisation.

The benefits of volunteering have always been widely accepted but now more than ever we are learning that giving your time to others directly influences your psychological well-being by altering brain chemistry and reducing isolation – win win!

Eva Cermacova presents awards to students from Parkside School

Esther Fisher

In 2026 we have welcomed new volunteers in Chesterfield and Shirebrook offices, and one of our volunteers Monika, has gone on to be offered paid employment with us in Shirebrook for the Help is Here project. In the summer we were excited to offer two secondary school students from Parkside school work experience placements. They both really enjoyed their time with us and both were interested to return in future to volunteer.

Our volunteers tell us that working for DUWC has helped them gain skills, boost confidence, meet new friends and support the community- they really feel like they are making a difference!

We continue to face hard times with cuts to our funding and the need for volunteers is as crucial as ever, we value our volunteers and the experience and support they give DUWC.

If you are considering giving a few hours a week to work as a volunteer, we would welcome your interest, get in touch and help us to continue our great work within the community.

Our Funders 2026

Local Authorities

- Amber Valley Borough Council
- Bolsover District Council
- North East Derbyshire District Council

Parish and Town Councils

- Alfreton Town
- Ault Hucknall
- Belper Town
- Brimington Parish
- Clay Cross Parish
- Clowne Parish
- Eckington Parish
- Grassmoor Parish
- Heanor and Loscoe Town
- Heath and Holmewood Parish
- North Wingfield Parish
- Pinxton Parish
- Pleasley Parish
- Scarcliffe Parish
- Shirebrook Town
- Somercotes Parish
- South Normanton Parish
- Sutton cum Duckmanton Parish
- Warsop Parish

Grants and Donations

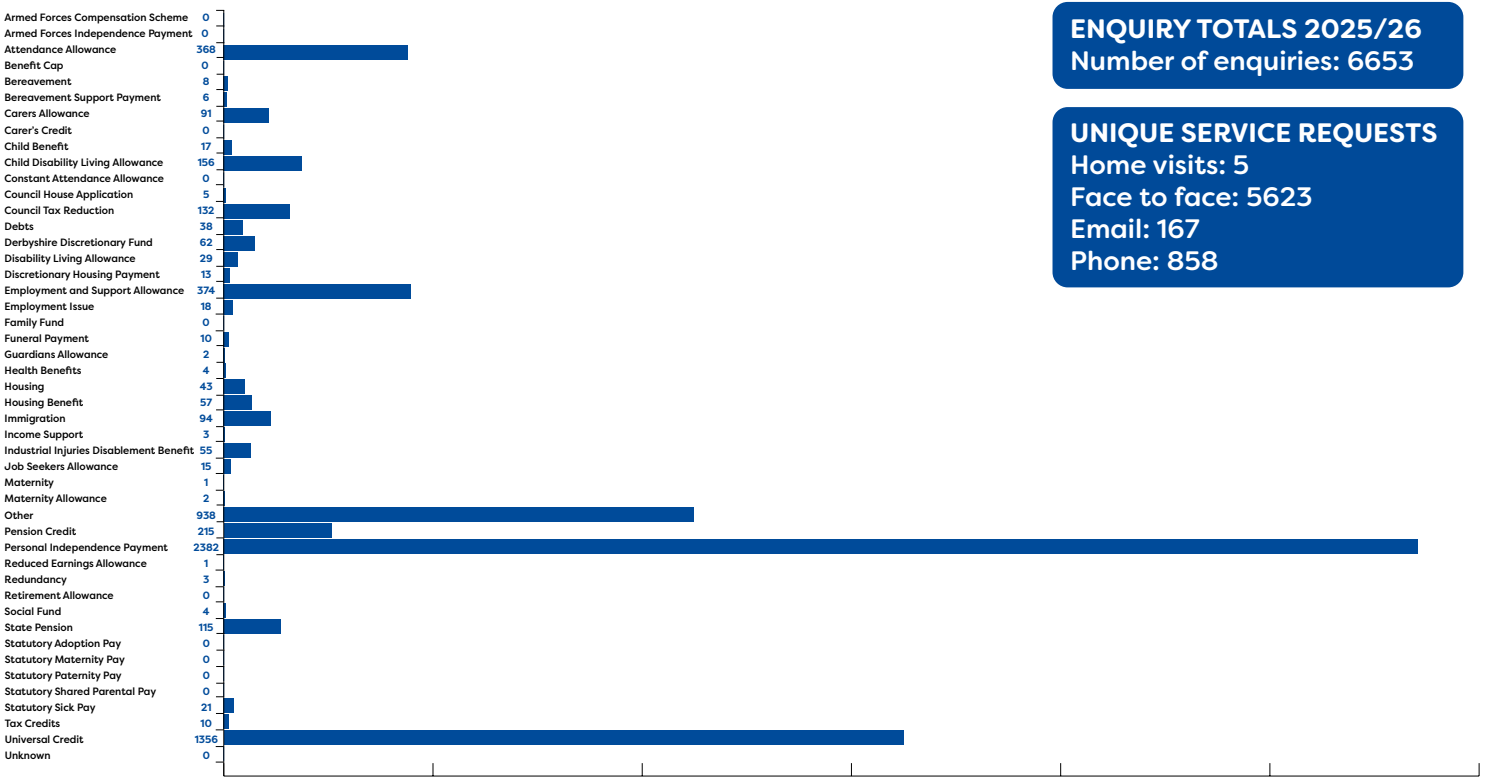
- Coalfields Regeneration Trust
- Community Lottery Fund
- Garfield Weston Foundation
- Henry Smith Foundation
- North Derbyshire Miners' Welfare Trust
- Postcode Places Trust
- Trussell Trust
- Derbyshire One Fund For All
- Unite East Midlands Region
- Numerous Unite Industrial Branches
- GMB Midlands Region
- Thompsons Solicitors
- Graysons Solicitors
- Grassland Hasmoor Futures
- Chesterfield Community Fund
- NE Derbyshire Shared Prosperity Fund
- Healthy NE Derbyshire Partnership
- Anonymous Charitable Donations

Statistics – Appeals Totals

Lead Issue	Abandoned	Pending	Completed	Arrears amount	Weekly amount
Attendance Allowance	5	3	2	£0.00	£0.00
Carers allowance	0	0	1	£690.00	£86.45
Child Benefit	0	1	0	£0.00	£0.00
Child Disability Living Allowance	2	10	7	£14,185.49	£259.15
Disability Living Allowance	0	2	0	£0.00	£0.00
Employment and Support Allowance	2	9	3	£4,470.00	£140.00
Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit	3	3	1	£7,897.90	£118.50
Job Seekers Allowance	1	0	0	£0.00	£0.00
Pension credit	1	4	0	£0.00	£0.00
Personal Independence Payment	59	247	201	£1,099,700.82	£37,854.96
State Pension	0	2	0	£0.00	£0.00
Tax credits	1	1	0	£8,800.00	£0.00
Universal credit	15	42	20	£52,943.21	£998.92
Overall Totals	**89**	**324**	**235**	**£1,179,887.42**	**£39,457.98**

As a result of these tribunals the following amounts were awarded: lump sum arrears £1,179,887.42. Ongoing weekly benefits (over a year equals £2,051,814.96). In 2026, general enquiries and take-up work resulted in payments of £3,368,544.63 for Derbyshire Residents. **During this year that has meant £6,600,247.01 has been won through our advice and representation services across our core work and projects.**

Statistics – Enquiry Issues (excludes case work)



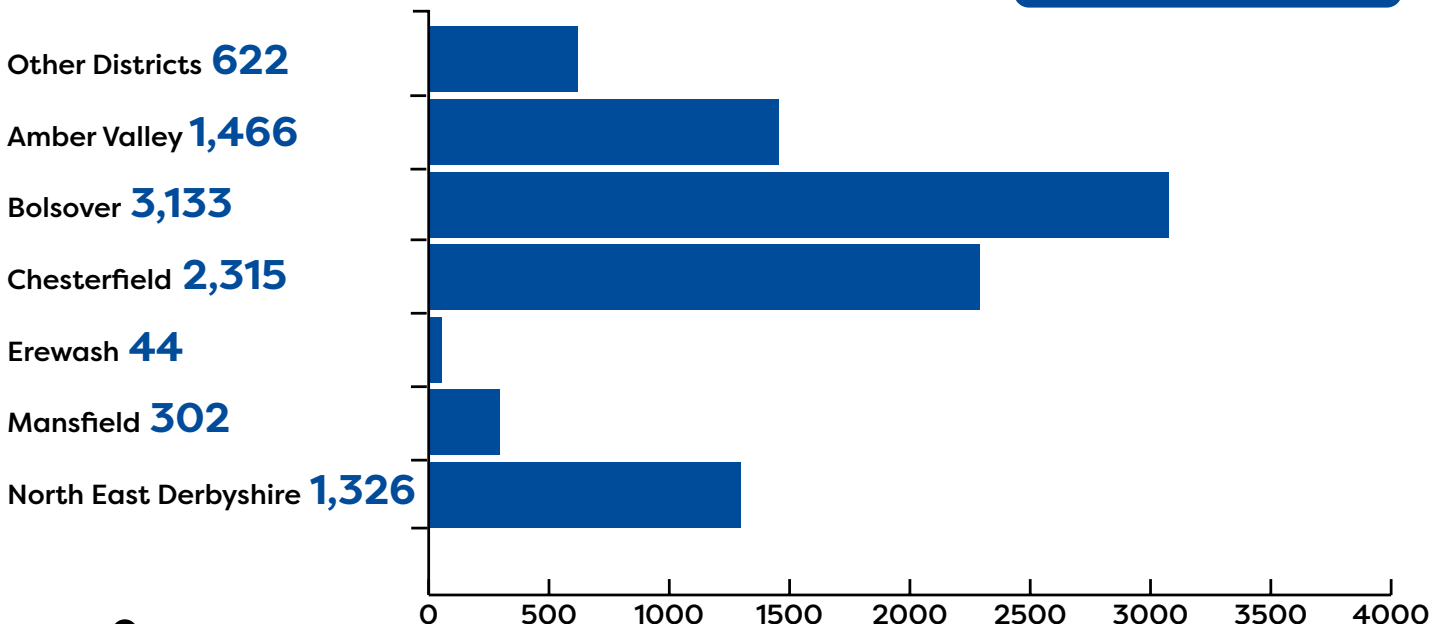
ENQUIRY TOTALS 2025/26
Number of enquiries: 6653

UNIQUE SERVICE REQUESTS
Home visits: 5
Face to face: 5623
Email: 167
Phone: 858

Statistics – Issue Origins

October 1st 2025 – September 30th 2026

Total Issues: 9,208



South Normanton and Alfreton Foodbank

In partnership with Trussell Trust and South Normanton Foodbank we continue to provide help and support to foodbank users to try and make sure they will not need to use that service in the future having helped them through their financial difficulties and maximized their income.

We were successful with a bid to the Lottery's Awards for All funding to support this work and we thank all the volunteers at the Foodbanks along with the coordinator Lisa who works hard to maintain this much needed service.

Our Adviser Lyndsey Nicholls at South Normanton Foodbank

Case study

A person was referred to our Foodbank Advisers at Alfreton foodbank. The person had significant long term health conditions and had had their first Personal Independence Payment (PIP) application rejected.

To support with immediate financial issues, we helped the person to make an application to Derbyshire Discretionary Fund. They received two payments to help them pay for gas, electricity and food. Further, the person was supported to request a Mandatory Reconsideration of the PIP decision and when this came back with the decision unchanged, we encouraged them to challenge this at tribunal.

With our representation this was ultimately successful and the person was awarded over £13,000 in arrears together with an on-going benefit entitlement of just under £600 a month. This positive financial outcome also meant that the client no longer needed to access the foodbank for food support.

North Derbyshire Miners' Welfare Trust

An ex-miner's Widow, was brought to see us at our Alfreton office by a neighbour who was concerned about her welfare. She had no income at all since leaving her part time job 3 and a half months prior. She suffered from health and memory issues, as a result she could not pay her bills and was struggling to feed herself and her dog.

After conducting a full benefits check we found that she was entitled to claim her State Pension (SP) a little over 4 years ago but had no recollection of ever receiving an invite to claim. She had also had changed her bank account and never notified the miners pension scheme to have her late husband's pension continue to be paid to her. She also hadn't claimed her private pension of which she had been entitled to since finishing work.

We referred to the local foodbank where she was able to collect a food parcel same day for herself and also some dog food for her dog. We also helped her claim an emergency payment from Derbyshire Discretionary Fund to help towards her energy costs. We contacted DWP requested the relevant paperwork to be sent and help her claim her SP. We also recognized that the client met criteria to be eligible for Attendance Allowance.

We then contacted both the miners' pension scheme and her private pension provider and assisted her to change her bank details for the miners' pension. Our advisor assisted her to obtain a copy of her Birth certificate which was required as part of the evidence needed to collect her private pension. We then assisted with completing the forms to speed up the process.

Attendance allowance was successfully awarded. As a result our advisor helped her claim Council Tax Reduction (CTR).

Eventually, her SP was put into payment at a rate of £323.49 a week, together with a lump sum payment of arrears, £39,709.65. Further, the widow's private pension and her Miners pension were put back in to payment.

These outcomes had a major positive impact on her financial situation.

Her on-going annualised benefit entitlement - £20,826.72 in addition to her miners' pension and private pension.

Total arrears awarded - £40,592.65.

Total annualised financial gain for client - £61,419.37.

Help is Here

Our project, which started in 2020, gives help, advice and representation to migrant workers in North Derbyshire and North Notts. Based in Shirebrook, our office has become established as an oasis of help for all our communities.

The project is Community Lottery funded until October 2028. We continue to provide sustainable help and advice in the areas of several benefits and also, what in many cases became crucial help with immigration applications. This was possible thanks to the qualifications (Level 1 IAA) our two project workers, Joanna Zon and Marcin Proc obtained by the end of 2025.

Thankfully, we are continuously supported by more experienced immigration advisors who are always happy to complete a quality assurance check.

In the past year we have gained a long-term volunteer and have had assistance from both young and older supporters and volunteers throughout in helping to further establish the Help Is Here project. In doing so we expanded our presence into social media and collaborated with other local organisations. Our work has been highly successful.

Alicja Zon, Welfare Rights Advisor left in June 2026

We have worked with 235 unique individuals in the past year with 600 service requests. We have dealt with 16 Appeals tribunals and we have 13 pending. In total through monies gained through tribunal work and support with benefits claims (annualised) we have brought in £1,090,063 into the pockets of those that have engaged with the project as well as £39,323 in debts written off and £5429 in grants gained.

As our project is very well established and known within the Eastern European communities, this year within our annual BBQ event we could see a few different faces from other ethnicities. This made us really happy as it is a proof of those from other backgrounds slowly getting to know us and trust us. We feel this is what we are here for, to break the barriers.

Help is Here cont.

Case study

The man came to our Shirebrook office as he displayed health issues which affected his day-to-day functioning.

He claimed Universal Credit (UC) but he could not financially afford to take some time off so he forced himself to go to work. He also claimed for PIP in the past but the form was completed by his son, and he was awarded no points.

He appealed this decision with the help of our Project. However, as his condition deteriorated and his needs changed, we advised making a new claim.

In the meantime, we helped him to claim Council Tax Reduction and he was awarded Limited Capability for Work Related Activity, and not long after his most recent Personal Independence Payment claim was successful.

He said that we gave him a peace of mind in the worst period in his life.

Each week we have been working in partnership with Derbyshire Adult Community Education Service delivering English as a foreign language classes.

This past year, we continued to advertise our services and seek out those who may need our support. As part of one of our campaigns, we visited our local Sports Direct factory where we opened a stall and chatted with migrant workers who may seek support regarding any financial or immigration issues, as well as empowering them to speak up about any wrongdoings or discrimination they experienced.

We also reinforced connections and celebrated the running of Help is Here at our annual BBQ where we invited previous service users and supporting groups, such as the Polonia Chesterfield, Polish Community Group in Shirebrook, BLAST.

Our charity however was also able to help other organisations and help voices be heard nationwide. In July, we hosted a group intervention for migrant workers to share their experiences of maltreatment, discrimination or behaviours witnessed from their time in a factory work setting as part of research conducted by a previous DUWC volunteer.

Help is Here cont.

Earlier this year, one of our workers shared our story and impact when speaking at a social justice and poverty conference designed by a poverty research and networking organisation (PRAN) for those in their early careers.

This conversation facilitated discussions amongst those new to, or going into, advisory work on best practices, commonly faced issues, and barriers for immigrants seeking welfare, as well as changes necessary to better support this demographic.

Sadly, our service users still generally face a multitude of challenges and barriers in the welfare system due to automated processes or are not being provided adequate adjustments. We're happy that we can advocate for them and help however we can.

Our biggest worry now is to gain further funding to be able to run the Help Is Here service and continue to support our community when the Lottery Community Fund ends.

Case study

A woman came to see us in Shirebrook as she had reached State Pension age. She recently separated from her husband who was financially abusing her, but remained at the same property.

Her UC claim was about to end and she was worried about finances as she only works part time but due to health issues, she was very often off sick.

We helped her to make a claim for Pension Credit (PC), Housing Benefit (HB), Council Tax Reduction (CTR), and Attendance Allowance (AA). With our support she was awarded higher rate of AA but refused PC, HB and CTR.

We challenged these decisions, which were then overturned on the Mandatory Reconsideration stage. She is now financially independent and reports that she is living a much happier life.

"Thank you for your help and support last week, looking for attendance allowance. Also to tell you I have been to a men's support group 'The Shed' at the football stadium. I cannot tell you how much you listening made a difference to me. Thank you once again."

Tim Wilkinson Retires

Beginning as a volunteer, recommended by the Communities that Work Programme back in 2008, Tim was employed by DUWC as an advice worker from November 2009.

Tim quickly became a respected member of our team and was very well liked by the people using our service. The feedback reflected his friendly, empathetic manner putting people at ease when facing very problematic situations.

He reveled in Tribunal Work representing hundreds of claimants. Tim had experienced life coming into the organisation as a volunteer and subsequently supported dozens of new volunteers wishing to support our Welfare Rights team.

Many people have benefitted from his guidance and gone on to gain jobs in the sector. Importantly Tim always supported and contributed to the campaigning side of our work, recognising the need to raise the issues that caused people to seek advice in the first place.

Tim took over the Brimington Outreach for many years and was instrumental in making that outreach the success it is today, providing us with many case studies outlining the importance of this work in the community.

Tim Wilkinson

Your Voice Your Rights - Tribunal victory

Tribunal victory after man lost benefits when sent to wrong Jobcentre!

A man from Shirebrook has won his Social Security tribunal after losing his benefits following the ongoing problems of the temporary closure of the Jobcentre in the Town.

Mr Cooper, who suffers with health problems, received a message on his mobile phone journal on 9th January 2025 stating Shirebrook job centre was closed. However, on the same day he got a text message from UC advising his appointment was at Shirebrook job centre.

On the 14th January he received a text message reminding him he needed to attend his appointment at Shirebrook job centre on the 15th January. He attended Shirebrook Jobcentre at the time and date allotted but in actual fact his appointment was at Mansfield. Because he did not attend this appointment his benefit claim was closed down.

As a result he would then have to open a new claim that would mean he would lose money as his previous benefit was higher.

"It is perfectly possible for a building that was closed one day could be reopened on the following day." said Andy Parkes, Welfare Rights worker at Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres, who represented Mr Cooper in court. "In fact the Department for Work and Pensions state that they are looking into possibility to reopen it. The DWP sent conflicting information to a claimant who followed the most recent advice he received from the DWP which was to attend Shirebrook job centre."

The misdirection took place in January 2025 but Mr Cooper's case has only just come to court leaving him out of pocket for a year.

Shirebrook Jobcentre has been closed, since the August 2024 due to asbestos issues and structural problems.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have said that they are either looking to make good the building, or move to alternative premises in Shirebrook. In the meantime, the DWP have redirected people to Mansfield Job Centre. Over two years on there has been no progress with Jobcentre users picking up the travel costs often when required to attend.

"This is not good enough" said Colin Hampton, Coordinator Derbyshire Unemployed Workers Centres."

"The fact that, many months following the temporary closure of the Jobcentre, no movement has taken place, leads me to believe that time is being used to prepare people for the closure of this local service and alternative downgraded facilities imposed that will no doubt be withdrawn further down the line. This has happened at other such service closures across Derbyshire and beyond."

"At some point everyone in Shirebrook will know someone, friend, neighbour or family member who might need these services should they fall sick, become disabled or lose their job. We must put pressure on to the DWP and decision makers to retain a full service at a Jobcentre in Shirebrook."

Shirebrook Jobcentre is now a van!

After announcing the temporary closure of the Shirebrook Jobcentre, nearly two years ago, following structural problems, the Department for Work and Pensions have replaced it – with a van!

Resembling a fast food outlet the Jobcentre van made its first appearance at the Shirebrook Leisure Centre car park last month.

Shirebrook mobile Jobcentre

Shirebrook Jobcentre is now a van!

Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres sent a mystery shopper to pay a visit

She said "Three staff members are packed into a van with not enough space to swing a sardine. I asked them about a neighbour who was now wheelchair-bound and needed a benefits check. They told me to bring her down when they had someone there who could help. I asked where would they be seen? I was told, with a great deal of embarrassment, that they would conduct the business in the car park."

Our mystery shopper said that this was not going to work as it was not a confidential place to discuss financial and health matters. *"An embarrassed shrug of the shoulders was their response."* She went on to say.

Colin Hampton commented, "The idea of using a van is all very well in rural areas where there is no alternative, but not in a conurbation like Shirebrook. It is a waste of money and, when no one uses it, will be withdrawn. We've seen it all before. The MP, Natalie Fleet needs to put some pressure on the Department to reinstate a proper job centre with full services in Shirebrook as soon as possible. If Sports Direct moves to Warwickshire, as seems likely, a job centre will be a much-needed service to support the community facing mass unemployment.

"It is one thing to feel like you are a left behind community but another to strip away the services that might help people to catch up! We need full jobcentre services in Shirebrook. No other option will be good enough for the people of Shirebrook and surrounding area" Colin concluded.

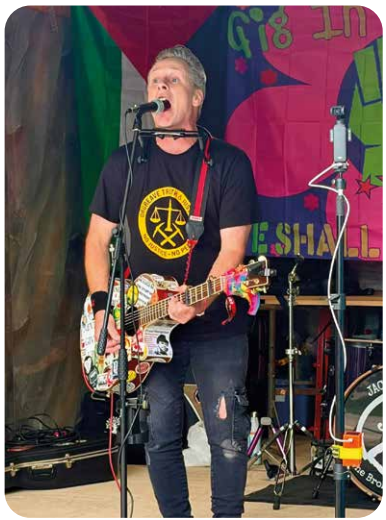
Colin Hampton hopes the appearance of the embarrassing van will refocus campaigners to continue to press the DWP into action.

"Just dropping a quick note to say massive thank u for helping me with my PIP appeal!! I really thought I was going to lose everything, but you fought my corner. Money came through yesterday, and I can finally pay off my debt. Honestly can't thank you enough for your patience with me when I was panicking. Top service."

Your Voice Your Rights - Gig in the Garden 2026

This summer one of the supporters of DUWC, Gabrielle Moran, hosted an event in her garden whereby bands and musicians were performing in order to raise much needed funds for our charity.

It was a great success with a number of fantastic live acts throughout the day and into the evening.



Pictured left: Joe Solo entertains the garden festival goers

We were so thrilled to be supported in this way and the whole event was an amazing experience. £993 was raised for DUWC. Thank you so much to the supporters of 'We shall Overcome'.

Thanks to all our supporters this year for their kind donations, especially to June Culley.

Pictured left: Colin Hampton with June Culley and Esther Fisher

Healthy North East Derbyshire Partnership

With the Cost of Living Crisis likely to become entrenched over the coming months we have recognised the need to focus our support in the most deprived areas as well as communities that have previously not benefitted from our on-going outreaches. With funding accessed through NED District Council we are providing a full time 'personal' support worker who will not only provide essential advice to clients on benefits take up and welfare advice but also signpost to other vital support.

When DUWC has a presence in an area, we can improve people's lives both with hard outcomes (financially) and with soft outcomes about wellbeing and greater ability to access services, often amounting to improvements of over 25%. With this project we are focussing on achieving long term improvements which can be tracked and demonstrate lasting change. As a comparable example our interventions with Food Bank partners demonstrate that 40% no longer need foodbank support following our direct assistance. We know that in in areas of NE Derbyshire there is an unmet need.

We focus on the elderly and families with young children, both of which have difficulty accessing central services and can struggle with web based advice and support. We highlight the possibility of assistance from funds such as attendance allowance; carers allowance; child disability living allowance; pension credit and personal independence payments.

Postcode Places Trust

Postcode Places Trust has given support to DUWC for work in DE55 postcode area of Amber Valley over the next three years. This service is invaluable to people who are on low income and struggling through the cost of living crisis. This works meets with the Trust's funding themes by preventing or reducing the impact of poverty and supporting marginalised groups and tackling inequality. Giving people our support means they will then have the knowledge and access to services and our project will help bring people closer to the labour market.

There are very few charitable organisations that offer face to face advice on benefits issues, and so DUWC is a lifeline for many people.

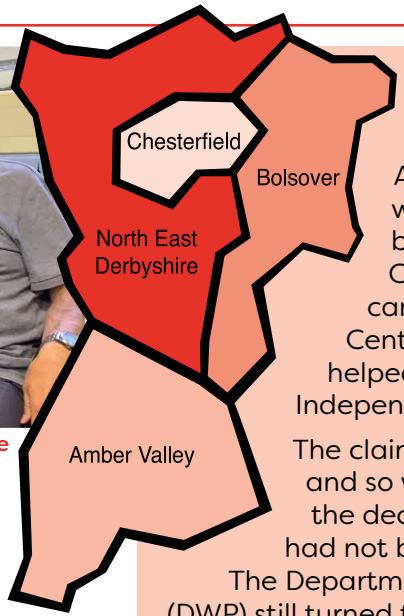
Around the area – Chesterfield

It has been a difficult year in our Chesterfield headquarters with the coming to an end of 43 years of continuous grant support from Chesterfield Borough Council (CBC).

Andy Parkes, Welfare Rights Adviser

As a result we have had to close our Staveley and Hasland outreach surgeries and close our service in Chesterfield to drop in callers on Fridays.

We hope that the decision will be reversed in the coming year. Without core funding it is difficult, nearing impossible, to attract project funding. Despite these problems we have delivered a superb service across Chesterfield. During this year we have seen 1106 CBC residents with 1706 enquiries.



Case Study - Staveley

A homeless and vulnerable woman that had recently been rehoused in Staveley by Chesterfield Borough Council came into the Chesterfield Centre at 1 Rose Hill East and we helped her complete a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) form.

The claim was initially turned down and so we assisted her in challenging the decision as her medical conditions had not been fully taken into account. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) still turned the claim down and so we supported her in taking the case to tribunal.

After 7 months from the original PIP claim, the DWP offered the woman a PIP payment of £558 every four weeks, which she accepted. The client also received a back payment of £5464.43.

Around the area – Chesterfield

Case Study - Chesterfield

A woman who had her vocal chords removed and has severe verbal communication difficulties had a migration notice to claim Universal Credit (UC). She was unable to do this online and manage a UC journal. DUWC advisers supported her with a telephone claim needing to speak on the clients behalf. We repeatedly asked the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to communicate by text. The DWP repeatedly sent texts asking our client to phone them causing overwhelming psychological distress with threats of non-payment of benefit. DUWC escalated this to the MPs office and DWPs complaint team, to no avail.

We carried out a home visit to ring UC after the DWP sent yet another text request to phone. DUWC have asked for all future correspondence to be put in writing due to her severe communication difficulties. We will continue to support her as there has been no change or improvement in our client's health or financial circumstances. However, we should not have to do this if only this woman was shown some respect.

Case Study - Barrowhill

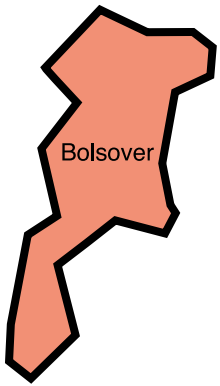
A woman from Barrow Hill came to us at our Barrow Hill advice surgery at the Haven Community Room for help with tribunal representation having submitted a new Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claim.

DUWC had not assisted her previously. She completed her own PIP claim form and then when this was turned down, she submitted a Mandatory Reconsideration (MR).

On seeing our social media messages about our presence in Barrow Hill during our take-up campaign, she came along to ask for help and representation at her forthcoming Appeal Tribunal as her MR had been refused.

Our adviser provided representation and, with our help, she was successful receiving enhanced daily living and enhanced mobility that was awarded for 5 years and arrears of £17,200 was paid.

Around the area – Bolsover



Fantastic support from Bolsover District has seen our busy district-wide operation go from strength to strength. Our HQ in Shirebrook is supported by outreach surgeries in Clowne, Creswell, Bolsover, New Houghton, Pinxton and also help via the South Normanton Foodbank. However faced with staffing difficulties we have had to close the New Houghton sessions but will still be providing a great service to all people in the Ault Hucknall ward.

The main team at Shirebrook has consisted of John Power, Andy Parkes, and Alicja Zon plus Allison Jarvis with support from Jon Jarvis, Andy King and the Help is Here team.

During 2026, in the District of Bolsover we have seen 942 unique residents with 1994 service requests. This is the busiest of our areas for advice enquiries.

Case Study - Hillstown

A woman from Hillstown came to our Bolsover Assembly Rooms outreach. A Personal Independence Payment Review assessment had taken place and her mobility award had been reduced from enhanced to standard.

Our adviser assisted with a Mandatory Reconsideration (MR) as there had been no change or improvement to the woman's health or functions. The DWP did not change this decision following the MR. With our help she appealed to go to Tribunal. The DWP looked again at this decision and overturned it re-awarding high rate mobility at £81 per week and arrears of £1624.00.

This process took approximately four months of assistance from the Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres. The woman had previously attended our Bolsover outreach needing assistance with Universal Credit, as she had an overpayment and needed assistance to contact the DWP about this. She had also come to us concerning healthcare costs for dental treatment which the she had paid for when she had entitlement to free dental treatment as she was receiving Universal Credit.

Around the area – Bolsover

Case Study - Pinxton

A woman came to our Pinxton outreach back in 2023. The DWP had started a review of her Personal Independence Payment (PIP). She was only getting the standard rate of daily living, and nothing for mobility.

The DWP decided that she was not entitled to any rate of PIP, despite her condition getting worse. This caused much stress and upset for the woman who was struggling with her health and also trying to care for her disabled son.

We helped her challenge this decision and collected medical evidence. The case took over 18 months to go to be heard at tribunal court, and understandably, she was very nervous and anxious. In the wait, her condition had got worse and her sister had moved to live next door to her for extra support. At the tribunal the panel were able to identify very quickly that the DWP's decision to remove this person's benefit was wrong. They decided to increase her benefit to enhanced daily living and enhanced mobility, and backdated the decision to 2023.

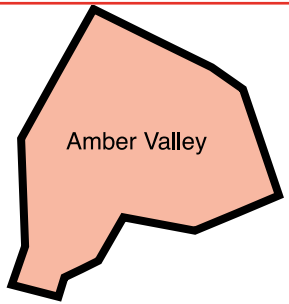
She was so relieved and thankful for our support. The woman received £187.45 per week and will be due a back payment of £24,368.50.

Case Study - Creswell

A Creswell man who suffers arthritis and works full time came to us at Limestone House for a Mandatory Reconsideration on his Personal Independence Payment claim. He was new to our service.

The reconsideration was unsuccessful and we advised going to tribunal where we would represent. The tribunal was successful and back pay of benefit was awarded totalling £7500 and additional weekly payment of benefit coming to £412 per month. The man is now able to cut his working hours as he is struggling and his wife can claim Carers Allowance that can be backdated for 3 months.

Around the area – Amber Valley



Fantastic support from Amber Valley Borough Council has strengthened our work in the Borough. Support from Somercotes Parish and from Alfreton, Belper and Heanor & Loscoe Town Councils has further supported our provision in Amber Valley.

Postcode Places trust grant support has helped with work in DE55 area so we are in a more favourable position to deliver our services.

Colin Bennett, John Power and Jon Jarvis have been key to our successes alongside the Trussell Trust Foodbank advice team of Lyndsey Nicholls and Joanne Johnson.

In 2026 our work in Amber valley this year has seen 426 unique amber valley residents receive support with 885 service requests.

Colin Bennett

Joanne Johnson

Case Study - Codnor

A Codnor couple attended our Heanor outreach. The man was receiving Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) and was unsure if he would ever be well enough to return to work. He receives Personal Independence Payment (PIP) because of the many difficulties he has in looking after himself due to his health conditions. His partner looks after him, but is unable to claim Carer's Allowance as her part time net earnings are more than £196 per week. They asked as to how their joint incomes would change in various scenarios including either or both giving-up work or reducing their hours.

The man was advised that if he is still unfit for work after six months his SSP will end, but he will be able to make a claim for Employment & Support Allowance, regardless of his partner's income, as this is based upon his National Insurance contributions in the previous few years. This is an example of where our work does not result in an award but is of great value to our clients.

Around the area – Amber Valley

"THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU!! I don't know what I would have done without you last month. When the council cut my housing benefit I was out of my mind with stress. You fixed it all so fast. You are true angels, keep up the good work!!"

"Thanks a lot for helping me sort out my pension credit. I am not good with computers or reading all them official letters so I was lost. You never made me feel stupid and sorted it properly. Thanks for a cup of tea as well."

Case Study - Belper

Accompanied by a Social Prescriber, a woman visited our Belper outreach for completion of a renewal form for her then current Personal Independence Payment (PIP) award of enhanced rate daily living and standard rate mobility. She has a range of physical and mental health conditions, which have a major effect on her ability to look after herself with tasks such preparing a meal, taking medication, bathing, using the toilet, dressing, meeting people, budgeting, planning & following a journey and mobilising.

After a medical assessment had been completed, the DWP decided that she was no longer entitled to PIP. We completed a Mandatory Reconsideration request. Some months later, the DWP decided that they would not change their first decision. We completed an appeal application to take the case to Tribunal. Some weeks later, the DWP decided that they were unwilling to defend their earlier decision and reinstated her previous PIP award with back-dating to when it ceased.

She will now receive £144.90 per week, plus over £3000 in back-dated benefits.

Furthermore, as she passed state pension age during this period and because she lives alone and no-one receives Carer's Allowance or the Universal Credit Carer Element for looking after her, her potential Pension Credit maximum amount (before deducting incomes excluding PIP) has increased to £324.05 per week.

Around the area – North East Derbyshire

North East Derbyshire is made up of many small villages around the major towns of Dronfield and Clay Cross. DUWC is trying to make sure that no one misses out as a result of not being able to find access to services. With the support of the Council and the Healthy North East Derbyshire Partnership we have been working to bring our advice team to all who need it.

Brigit Shipman, Jon Jarvis and Katrina Hudson are the main people delivering our outreach programme although many people are locating the services at Chesterfield and Alfreton.

We have supported 521 unique people from North East Derbyshire during 2026 and this has led to 901 service requests.

Brigit Shipman

Case Study - North Wingfield

A woman came to our North Wingfield outreach, following our leafleting on our awareness campaign, in a distressed state. She lives with her non- dependent son who is unemployed. She also suffers with anxiety and epilepsy with active seizures. The woman reported living on a £100 a month after deductions from her Universal Credit (UC) these included historic overpayments and bedroom tax.

Our Adviser looked on her (UC) journal and this was correct. Our adviser contacted UC and got all her deductions frozen for 3 months and also updated the journal with a change of circumstances as limited capacity for work not limited capacity for work related activity had been awarded and asked for a reassessment. Personal Independence Payment (PIP) was also contacted with a change of circumstances as the woman receives high mobility but no daily living for her epilepsy. Our Adviser contacted North East Derbyshire District Council (NEDDC) for a discretionary housing form for bedroom tax.

Around the area – North East Derbyshire

continued...

We also supported her for a Derbyshire Discretionary Fund (DDF) emergency payment due to severe hardship and this was awarded. Our Adviser signposted her to Derbyshire Law Centre for debt and also advised her to contact Call Derbyshire for a blue badge, gold card and a radar toilet key. The woman had found her previous dealings with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) overwhelming and our support undoubtedly helped her through the complications of her claim. Our help managed to maximise her income and take away the stress of dealing with DWP. Her income was be increased by £800 per month.

Case Study - Stonebroom

A Stonebroom man's Personal Independence Payment (PIP) award was ended after a routine review. We completed a Mandatory Reconsideration request and the DWP refused to change their earlier decision, so we completed an application to an independent tribunal. The DWP decided that they could not potentially justify their decision to a tribunal panel and reinstated his PIP award with full back-dating to when it ceased.

When his PIP award had ended, the man was receiving income based Employment & Support Allowance (IB-ESA). As the man had been entitled to PIP and lived with his mother, who is entitled to Attendance Allowance because she has a need for care and attention to help look after herself, he was entitled to a Severe Disability Premium (SDP) in addition to his IB-ESA. This was lost when his PIP ended. Furthermore, his mother lost the Severe Disability Element of her Pension Credit as she was now living with a person deemed not disabled.

Once his PIP award was reinstated, we compelled the DWP to recalculate his old IB-ESA and thus his Transitional Protection award and also his mother's Pension Credit award. This case, affecting two disabled people, illustrates our work in resolving complex problems which otherwise would have adversely affected them and their health.

User Feedback Survey 2026

In September we hold our annual user feedback month to ensure that the high standards we have set for ourselves over the years are being maintained. The Feedback we have received from across our venues has been very positive.

A record 207 people completed the survey.

Waiting times

- 0–5 mins: 116 people
- 5–15 mins: 53 people
- 15–30 mins: 20 people
- 30–60 mins: 13 people
- Over 1 hour: 3 people

Each individual was asked if they would use our service again. 207 people responded that they would.

Each individual was asked if they would recommend our service to family or friends. 207 responded that they would.

Ways of hearing about DUWC

Each individual was asked how they had heard of DUWC:

- Family / Friends: 92 people
- Social Media: 8 people
- Trade Union: 0 people
- Referral from another service, including Jobcentre: 30 people
- Leaflet: 2 people
- Signage: 2 people
- Used Before: 36 people
- Other (includes Dementia even: 34 people

How users felt about the service

Each individual was asked how they felt about the service we provided them:

- Very Happy: 162 people
- Satisfied: 10 people
- Dissatisfied: 0 people
- Very Unhappy: 1 people

(Not all feedback forms boxes were fully completed)

Issues that users felt the DUWC should organise campaigns around

The main issues that were affecting our users were problems with PIP Medicals, Assessments and unfair decisions. The time taken for the DWP to make decisions was also raised. Next indicated were energy bills, food prices and cost of living. An array of benefit issues were highlighted including their complexity and low rates emphasising the need for help with Universal Credit and Pension Credit. Support for Carers was highlighted by a few alongside issues around Social Care and the issue of digital exclusion. This information will guide our lobbying and campaigning activities into the new year.

Where to get advice

Chesterfield & North East Derbyshire
1 Rose Hill East,
Chesterfield S40 1NU
Tel: 01246 231441
Email: info@duwc.org.uk
Monday – Friday 9.30am – 1.00pm

Bolsover District
54 Patchwork Row,
Shirebrook NG20 8AL
Tel: 01623 748161
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday
9am – 11.30am and 1pm – 4pm
Thursday, Friday
9am – 11.30am

Brimington
Community Centre,
Heywood Street
Monday 9.00am – 12noon

North Wingfield
Community Resource Centre,
Whiteleas Avenue
Tuesday 1.00am – 3:30pm

Grassmoor
Community Centre,
New Street
Friday 9.00pm – 11.30pm

Clay Cross
Clay Cross Social Centre, Market Street
Monday 10.00pm – 1.00pm

Bolsover
Assembly Rooms, Hill Top
Tuesday 1.00pm – 3.30pm

Clowne
Community Centre, Recreation Close,
Wednesday 1.00pm – 3.30pm

Creswell
Limestone House,
Elmton Road
Thursday 12.30pm – 3.30pm

Eckington
Business Centre,
Market Street
Thursday 1.00pm – 3.30pm

Pinxton
Village Hall, Kirkstead Road
Monday 9.30am-12noon

Amber Valley
Suite 4, Alfreton House,
High Street
Tel: 01773 832237
Tuesday and Wednesday
9.00am–12noon
1.00pm–4.00pm

Heanor
Heanor Town Hall, Buxton Room
Thursday 9.00am – 11:30am

Somercotes
Parish Hall, Nottingham Road
Monday 1.30pm – 4.00pm

Belper
Strutts Centre, Derby Road
Thursday 1.00pm – 3.30pm

Check www.duwc.org.uk for updates!

Trustees 2025/2026

The Trustees 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.

- Cllr. Graham Baxter
- Ian Rutledge
- Hilary Cave
- Cllr. Mary Kerry
- Elaine Tidd
- Cllr. Amanda Serjeant
- Cllr Christine Smith
- Sarah Roy
- Angela Webster
- Cllr. Mary Dooley
- Nikki Tugby
- Andrew King
- Paul Hardy
- Cllr. Steve Marshall-Clarke

Centre Staff 2025/26

Colin Hampton	Co-ordinator
Esther Fisher	Assistant Co-ordinator
Andy Parkes	Welfare Rights Advisor
Katrina Hudson	Welfare Rights Advisor
Alicja Zon	Welfare Rights Advisor
Brigit Shipman	Welfare Rights Advisor
Jon Jarvis	Welfare Rights Advisor
Lyndsey Nicholls	Welfare Rights Advisor
Joanne Johnson	Welfare Rights Advisor
John Power	Welfare Rights Advisor
Joanna Zon	Co- ordinator, 'Help is Here' Project
Marcin Proc	Advisor, 'Help is Here' Project
Monika Kuter	Admin ' Help is Here' Project

Thanks to all our funders, our Trustees, our OFFA Contributors, and all our supporters.

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