

Connecting Advice In Dorset



PROJECT REVIEW

This review presents a summary of the activity so far in implementing the Connecting Advice in Dorset project. For an overview of the project, download the Key Facts from our website www.caidorset.org.uk.

Purpose of Project: To develop and strengthen an integrated network of advice agencies in Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole areas, enabling providers to deliver a more efficient and comprehensive service to clients.

COMMUNICATIONS

We want all local advice providers to understand the purpose and progress of the project and have every opportunity to be involved. To that end, we have put together a Key Facts document, and send out a fortnightly e-bulletin with updates from the project as well as useful news from the sector. Over 120 individuals have signed up to receive our e-bulletin.

We have also developed our website, which now includes a basic database of all organisations in the local area who provide advice in social welfare law. We will continue to develop this database to make it more user-friendly.

EQUALITIES DEVELOPMENT

A key part of the project is increasing access to advice for minority groups so Dorset Race Equality Council are carrying out focus groups across Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole to further understand the barriers to advice and to encourage people from minority groups to consider volunteering as advisers. A very successful event was held in Bournemouth in May, and similar events are planned over the next 18 months.



Welfare Benefits Update, February 2014

TRAINING

To date, 9 training sessions have been held across the area and a Training Needs Assessment is underway to help us design and implement a training programme which meets the needs of local advice providers.

Initial findings demonstrate the need for good quality, free training both in subject areas such as benefits, debt, employment and housing, and in adviser skills such as Interview skills, Working with vulnerable adults and Challenging Discrimination. Over the next 18 months, a full and varied programme of free training will be rolled out across the area.

LOCAL ADVICE NETWORKS

In February, we held an area-wide network meeting to launch the project and bring together advice providers across Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole. The event focussed on Welfare Reform and received very positive feedback from the 61 delegates who attended. The event also provided an opportunity to initiate Local Advice Networks for each district and borough and these have been followed up by local meetings which will continue to meet quarterly.

Each LAN will be supported by the Project Manager, providing a central co-ordinating role.

*A second area-wide event will be held on **Thursday 9th October 2014** focussed on Managing Debt – please put this date in your diary and look out for more information.*

PROJECT GOVERNANCE

Our Project Advisory Board is chaired by a member of the Citizens Advice in Dorset (CAiD) Trustee Board and made up of senior staff from the four key partners and a representative from one of the 9 local Citizens Advice Bureaux.

URBAN ADVISER

As part of the project, Bournemouth CAB are hosting an Urban Adviser who works for 22 hours per week across Bournemouth and Poole providing advice in welfare benefits and debt, particularly in the most deprived areas of the area.

RURAL YOUNG PEOPLE'S ADVISER

In addition, Ansbury are hosting a Rural Young People's adviser who works for 18 hours per week across rural Dorset, providing advice and support in welfare benefits and money management to young people aged 16 – 25 years old. In 3 months, over 50 young people have been seen through this project.



Project Advisory Board

From left to right: Christine Cook - Christchurch CAB, Sam Whiting - Bournemouth CAB, Kate Parker - Shelter, Maureen Godfrey - CAiD Trustee, Jane Jones - DREC, Caroline Buxton - CAiD, Martin Vowles - Ansbury, Adnan Chaudry - DREC, Bryony Brown - CAiD

CONTACT US

To find out more information about the project, sign up to the e-bulletin, get involved in your Local Advice Network or access the training programme, please contact:

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