

Advice Link Network News

Making a Difference Together

Issue 29 November 2013 www.advicelink.org.uk



**Booking essential for a place at the
Advice Link Network Advisers' Conference
21st November 2013
9.30 am to 4 pm (including lunch)**

Speaker topics

- Jobcentre Plus / DWP update: Universal Credit , conditionality / claimant commitment
- Recent appeals procedures changes
- Remaining legal aid routes
- Urgent need - local discretionary schemes
- Blackpool4me changes
- Advocacy in the current climate

Workshops

- Financial literacy tools
- Money Advice and budgeting
- Quality in advice
- Form filling tips – PIP, DLA,
- ESA basics

Book via Eventbrite, on the link:
<https://advisersconf2013.eventbrite.co.uk>

The Conference is funded through the
Big Lottery Fund Advice Plus 2 Project
AP/2/010290873.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Inside:

- ◆ Switching extended!!
- ◆ Website changes
- ◆ Social Media survey
- ◆ Advice Week 2014
- ◆ Quality update
- ◆ Scams and Junk
- ◆ Welfare Reform

The Advice Link Network – bringing advice services together across
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde

Advice Week 2014
Monday 3rd March to Friday 7th March

Blackpool

**3rd March 2014: St John's Business & Community
 Centre, FY1 1BP**

Fylde

**4th March 2014: St Annes United Reformed Church,
 St Georges Rd. FY8 2AE**

Wyre

**6th March 2014: Fleetwood Library,
 North Albert Street, FY7 6AJ**

Preparations are underway for next year's Advice Week for organisations and residents in Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde.

In the past Network feedback suggests that more residents would have attended the event if there had been more widespread and earlier advertising in each area, e.g. leaflets in shops, GP surgeries, signage etc.

We would appreciate help and input from you with advertising the event and spreading the word to the residents of Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde.

Poster available soon. If you could help with the planning and organisation on the day this would be very much appreciated. Please contact Maggie via email, advicelink@blackpool.org.uk or tel. Advice Link 01253 476843.

Dates for your diary - venues to be confirmed.

08/11/2013	Community Advice Strategy Group
21/11/2013	Advisers Conference
24/01/2014	Welfare Benefits Practitioner Group
28/01/2014	Debt Adviser Practitioner Group
12/02/2014	Joint Review Day

For more information on the various network groups please contact
 Pam Cochrane on 476843

Network toolkits

For self help and support workers

As part of the Big Lottery Fund project, the Welfare Benefit Practitioner Group has developed a suite of template letters and toolkits and guides for the public and support workers to use. The current toolkits and templates **will soon available on the new Advice Link website** and include:

Toolkits / guides. Please ask for expert advice if you are not sure how to use them.

- **JSA Sanctions August 2013**
- **JSA 10 FORM August 2013**
- **ESA Appeals on medical / points August 2013**
- **ESA Medical evidence tool August 2013**
- **PIP / DLA appeals (Advicenow) August 2013**
- **PIP Score sheet Guidance, June 2013**
- **PIP Score sheet Tool, June 2013**
- **DLA 2 minute test for Children**
- **Taking Control of Your Money, December 2012**
- **Simple budget sheet, December 12**

Template letters and DWP forms

Template letters are examples to amend as needed. Please read the relevant toolkits and ask for expert advice if you are not sure how to use them.

- **Reconsideration template MUST USE FROM 28.10.13**
- **Appeal form GL24 use until 28.10.13**
- **Appeal form SSCS1 MUST USE FROM 28.10.13 pdf**
- **JSA sanction reconsideration letter**
- **JSA sanction appeal form WORDING**
- **JSA sanction hardship form pdf**
- **ESA Points / descriptors check list**
- **ESA example ESA 50 form pdf**
- **ESA Letter re failure to return ESA 50**
- **ESA Letter re failure to attend**
- **ESA refusal after medical reconsideration letter**
- **ESA refusal after medical appeal form WORDING**
- **ESA Letter of support**
- **ESA medical questionnaire – see ESA APPEAL toolkit before using**
- **ESA Request to move from Work Related to Support group**
- **ESA Support group points / descriptors checklist list**
- **DLA for children 2 min test pdf**
- **PIP descriptors score sheet pdf**

powered by 

Ready to switch? for residents

Are you paying too much for your household energy bills?

Blackpool Council "Ready to Switch?" collective energy switching scheme is extended to 18th November 2013 and isn't just for Blackpool residents – anyone can take part.

"Ready to Switch?" uses community purchasing power to negotiate prices with energy providers. It's quick and easy to take part - you can register for free with no obligation. It doesn't matter if you own or rent your home, or if you pay for your energy monthly, quarterly or up front via a pre-payment meter. **Nearly 2,000 Fylde Coast households joined the scheme earlier in the year and saved an average of £120 a year!**

How Does It Work?

It's easy to register - visit www.readytoswitch.co.uk before the 18th November 2013 and enter details of your current energy supplier, tariff and usage (you can find this information on your energy bills).

I don't have a computer – how can I take part?

- You can visit local free internet sites - all local libraries have free internet access for residents with a Blackpool library card. Self help computers are available at Blackpool Council's Customer First Centre on Corporation Street.
- Ask a trusted family member or friend to register you - one email address can be used to register up to 5 households.
- Call into Blackpool Council's Customer First Centre on Corporation Street or visit your local library for a registration form which you can complete and return via Freepost.
- Telephone 476843 if you require additional help to register.

What happens after I register?

- The energy supplier with the best deal will be determined during an auction on November 19th 2013
- You receive a personal energy offer around the end of November 2013.
- You then have until the January 13th 2014 to let us know if you would like to take up the new energy deal.
- Your details will only be shared with the new supplier if you confirm that you want to switch.

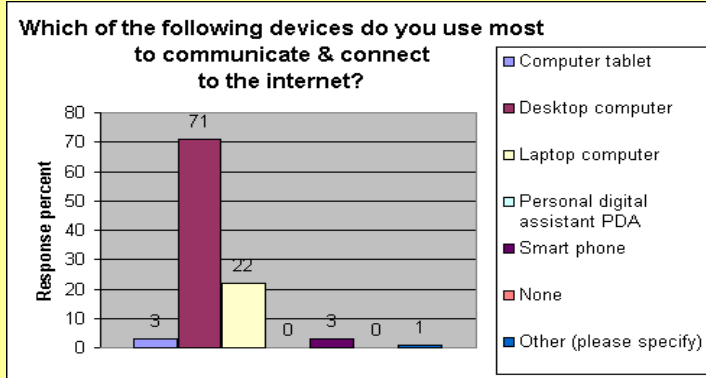
For more information visit www.readytoswitch.co.uk or telephone Blackpool Council Customer First on 477477

BlackpoolCouncil

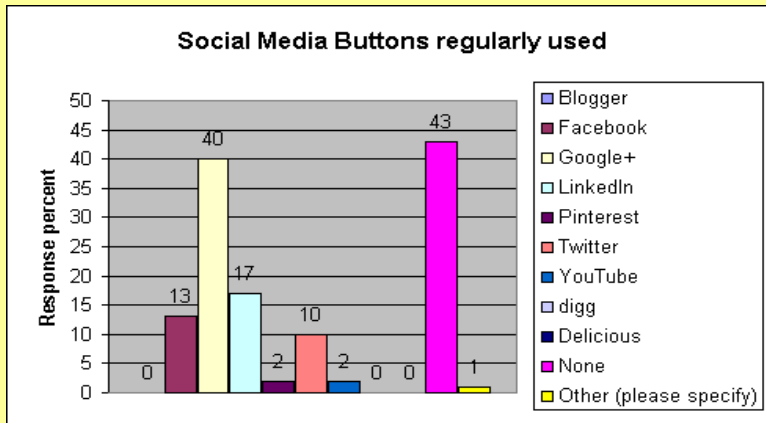
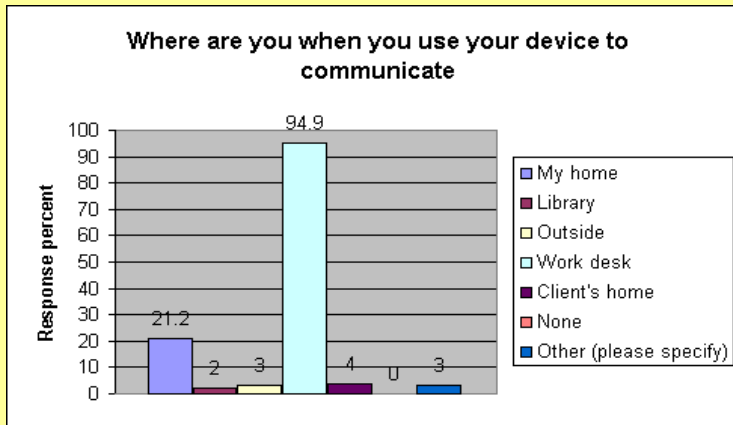
www.blackpool.gov.uk

What works for you? Network Social media survey findings

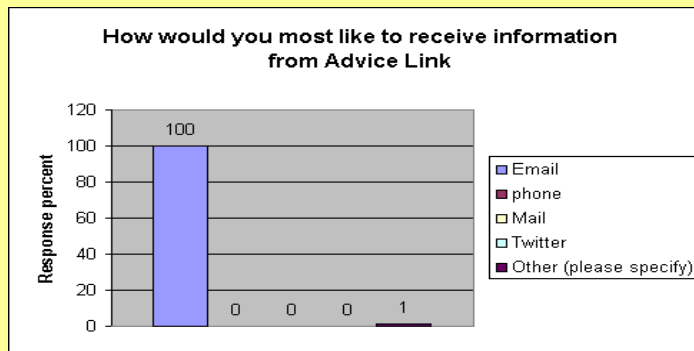
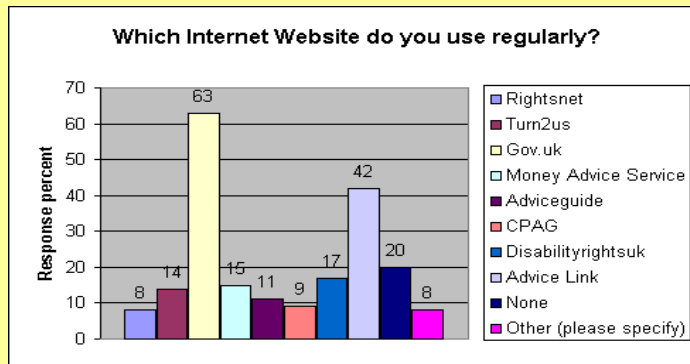
We asked how network members want to receive and send information around the Advice Link Network
And this is what 100 of you replied:



Other (please specify) *Tablet*



Network Social media survey findings contd.



6. How could Advice Link use media to help you in your advice work? (answered question 72 / skipped question 28)

The majority of partners who responded to this question reported they are happy with the current e mail service. Individual other suggestions included.

an app! Facebook Handouts maybe short video tutorials on what help is available locally? intros to local charities/schemes more regular bulletins on line forms and training material information and links to services for families Twitter Use of as many social media groups as possible as many people/organisations choose differently keep doing what it's doing. Thank you interactive q and a sites would be useful in the future, but would need easy access to hardware (info points) to make full use of these.

Thanks to all those who took the time to reply. The Advice Link team are always grateful for ideas and suggestions for improvements to make the Network more effective and efficient .Don't forget the review day in February where you can help plan the future of the Network.

Quality in advice

Hurrah!!

The Advice Link Team, following a desktop and on site audit in July, has been awarded the latest advice quality mark - AQS accreditation.



The Advice Quality Standard (AQS) tells clients that we offer a quality assured service.

It shows Advice Link have met criteria that demonstrate our commitment to professionalism, quality and customer care. Only organisations which have been audited and achieved the Standard are able to display the AQS logo.

Applying for the AQS

The Advice Services Alliance (ASA) announced that, following a tender process, it appointed Recognising Excellence (www.recognisingexcellence.co.uk) as the Assessment Body for the Advice Quality Standard (AQS).

Information about the AQS can be found at: www.advicequalitystandard.org.uk

Agencies who wish to arrange an audit or find out more about the Advice Quality Standard can contact Recognising Excellence by e-mailing Amanda Jordan at Amanda.Jordan@recognisingexcellence.co.uk or phoning her on 07584 355486. The cost of the initial Desk Top Review will be reduced by £100 and, in future, will be £400 plus VAT. All other audit prices will remain the same.

Big Lottery Fund support

The Quality Co-ordinator on the Big Lottery Fund project, has created a toolkit based on the quality standards developed by the Advice Services Alliance.

The project is also delivering a course “**Quality of Advice, Good Practice in Case Recording**” this course is very interactive and has been well received; it can be tailored to meet the needs of a particular organisation if you have a number of workers who you feel would benefit. Please contact

julia.hannaford@blackpoolcab.org.uk



Junk Mail and Cold Call alert - dangers to the vulnerable in their homes.

Trading Standards Blackpool are continuing their campaign to highlight the dangers posed to the elderly and vulnerable in their own homes.

Junk mail may seem like a harmless inconvenience to most of us, but to some, they can have a devastating psychological effect with the loss of thousands of pounds. Scam mail - as it's known, is more than junk mail. At best it is misleading, at worst it is completely bogus, with false claims, threats and demands for cash.

The **Think Jessica Campaign** was the first to highlight the dangers of junk mail. For five years Jessica was hounded by scammers, asking her for cash, predicting her future and making promises of lottery wins and successful prize draws. It all started with Readers Digest, who passed her details on to third parties. By the time she died, Jessica was receiving 30 letters a day, and it is estimated Royal Mail had delivered a total of 30,000 letters. She spent all day every day reading, sorting and responding, having become trapped in a delusional world that these criminals had created.

Because Jessica was not diagnosed as having a mental health condition her family were powerless to intervene, they tried every avenue to find help but none was available. Her daughter believes the torment the scammers inflicted on her contributed to her death.

We may think we 'know better' than to engage with these fraudsters, but far too many among us fall victim to false claims of lottery wins, free gifts, or contributions to bogus charities. All it takes is one response to one letter or catalogue, and that person's details can then be sold on to others for them to target in the same way. In many cases however, the correspondence can become more threatening or misleading. This process is commonly referred to as a 'suckers list'.

Trading Standards advice team see this phenomenon with alarming regularity, although unfortunately, it is often when it becomes so entrenched, that family members are unable to do anything about it. In one recent case, ten bin liners of letters were removed, along with boxes of unsolicited goods which had to be removed as they were posing a fire risk.

Advisors and those carrying out home visits are urged to look out for signs that the individuals they care for are on a 'suckers list' by the amount of mail left lying around. Any concerns should be relayed to us at the Trading Standards Advice Team who will be able to arrange a home visit where this is possible.

Scams and junk continued...

Telephone calls

Sales calls made over the phone can be just as damaging as mailing scams - particularly when the caller claims to be from a trusted organisation or makes misleading claims. It can be particularly distressing for elderly residents to receive 'silent' calls made from random diallers. In a bid to reduce the stress and upset caused to vulnerable people in their own homes, Trading Standards have some calls blocking devices to give away to those individuals most severely affected. Please contact us on 478375 if you have a recipient in mind and would like apply.

Telephone and Mailing Preference Service

For those who wish to opt out of receiving junk mail or sales calls which come from the UK, there is the Mailing Preference Service and the telephone preference service. Simply sign up online at www.mpsonline.org.uk for the mailing preference service (tel 0845 703 4599 to be sent the forms), or www.tpsonline.org.uk for the telephone preference service (tel: 0845 070 0707).

Both the TPS and the MPS are free services. Trading Standards are reiterating their warning for Blackpool residents to be aware of firms who claim a fee of up to £50 for registering your details.

As always, for any concerns regarding Blackpool residents or for advice, please contact Blackpool Trading Standards on 478375.

Keep Safe leaflet

Trading Standards in association with the Citizens Advice Bureaux and a host of other agencies have produced a comprehensive pack to address the most pressing consumer issues facing Blackpool residents and particularly vulnerable residents.

The Pack contains a range of useful information and resources, including:

- ◆ Blackpool's Safe and Secure Directory and Lancashire's Safe Trader Scheme
- ◆ No Cold Calling information
- ◆ Advice on getting work done in the home
- ◆ Scams checklist and how to protect yourself from junk mail and cold calls
- ◆ Advice Services on offer in Blackpool and the Fylde

For a supply of leaflets please call the Trading Standards Advice Team on 478375.

***Check before it Changes!!
Welfare Reform briefings: November
update on the Advice Link website***

Key reminders:

Summer

- From 10 June PIP for all new adult claims - no new claims to Disability Living Allowance for people aged 16 to 64.
(see *Advice Link PIP briefing*)

Oct 2013

- Universal Credit rolled out to more Job-centres (**not Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde**)
- Transfer from DLA to PIP begins in some areas (**not Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde**)
- Changes to appeals - **Mandatory reconsideration and direct lodgement for all DWP benefits and child maintenance cases.**

2013 – 2017

- Universal Credit roll out
- DLA to PIP transfer (mostly in 2015) timetables for our area yet to be confirmed

No need to be in the dark about Welfare Reform changes — Advice Link can provide advice for individuals, talks and training for you, your staff or volunteers.

Call 01253 476843.

**ADVICE
LINK**

we will show you
the right steps
to take

The Advice Link team

is here to support the Advice Link Network across Blackpool, Wyre & Fylde

*Write to: Advice Link,
c/o Blackpool Council, Town Hall, Blackpool FY1 1AD*

Tel: 01253 476843

Fax: 01253 477766

*Website:
www.advicelink.org.uk*

*Email:
advicelink@blackpool.gov.uk*

**Advice Link is funded by
Blackpool Council and
The Big Lottery Fund
Advice Plus Project**



Www: Bear with...!!

***The Advice Link website is moving due to the closure of
Blackpool4me but will still be available soon via***

www.advicelink.org.uk