

Advice Link Network News

Making a Difference Together

Issue 33 August 2014 : Looking back and ahead!



GOOD NEWS! COMING SOON!

Watch out for your invitation to be part of the Advice Link future!

More details and timescales inside.....

- ◆ **A New Steering Group to listen to your views:**
- ◆ **A New host organisation to act as Secretariat Service:** and
 - be the point of contact in terms of address, e mail, telephone
 - be responsible for creation and maintenance of a mailing list
 - arrange and service meetings and agendas
 - prepare business documents
 - disseminate information and act as a distribution centre
 - act as the accountable body and administer any budget

Meet them on page 3

- ◆ **A New opportunity for advice workers to *Make a difference* across Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde.**

But you will need to sign up to keep in the loop!

Watch out for the e mail in September.

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

Progress at Network event 23rd July.

Members from Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde attended an event held on 23rd July at the Blackpool City Learning Centre. This included speakers and a business meeting for all members of the Network, Community Advice Strategy Group and the Practitioner Groups.

Updates from **Speakers** included:

- o **Universal Credit** : <https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit-toolkit-for-partner-organisations>
- o **Child Maintenance update**: <http://www.cmoptions.org>
- o **Dementia awareness and training opportunities**
 - o <http://www.scie.org.uk/index.aspx>
 - o <http://www.dementiafriends.org.uk>
 - o www.alzheimers.org.uk
 - o www.ageukblackpool.org.uk

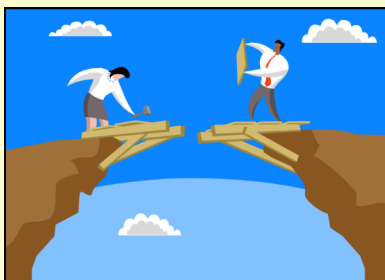
There then followed the **Business meeting** detailing the changes needed to the **Advice Link Network**.

Pam Cochrane, explained the model set up in 2001 had reached another proverbial “cliff edge” with:

- Big Lottery Fund grant ending 2014
- Local government cuts
- Setting up of a Blackpool Central Advice Team
- Staff changes - Pam and Maggie are moving on



All this meant the need to develop a model combining all the best elements and groups of the current network and that members would run themselves.



The group nominated by members to look at the future of the Network and associated groups has been working with Blackpool Council to build a way to maintain the best aspects of the Advice Link Network and a way forward has been devised.

An **Advice Link Partnership** (working title) would continue.

The meeting endorsed the model and set a timetable for transition with :

- * **Membership** - Open to statutory and non-statutory organisations and agencies delivering frontline advice and other interested parties.
- * **Governance** via a Steering Group
- * One organisation acting as a **Secretariat — Disability First has agreed to do this**
- * **Transitional period** – July 2014 to March 2015: Working Group act as Steering Group
- * **One off Start-up resources** from Blackpool Council

Meet your new Steering Group!

It was agreed on 23.7.14 that the Working Group set up to develop a new vision for organisation and proposals for governance and leadership of the Network, will serve as the Steering Group for the new model between now and 31.3.15.

The group members are:

- ◆ Alan Reid
Senior Manager, Disability Information Service
01253 472201 alanreid@disabilityfirst.org
- ◆ Andrew Walker
Housing Manager Rents Team, Blackpool Coastal Housing
01253 477360 andrew.walker@bch.co.uk
- ◆ Julia Hannaford
Advice Services and Acting Manager, Blackpool Citizens Advice Bureau
01253 308410 julia.hannaford@blackpoolcab.org.uk
- ◆ Michele Scott
Care & Repair (Wyre and Fylde) Manager, Wyre Council
01253 887540 Michele.Scott@wyre.gov.uk
- ◆ Terri Sawkill
Chief Executive, Age UK Blackpool & District
01253 622812 Terri.sawkill@ageukblackpool.org.uk

**If you have ideas or issues to raise about the future of the Network:
please contact one of the working group.**

Meet the future host organisation: Disability First

Disability First www.disabilityfirst.org is preparing to be the host and act as Secretariat Service for the future Advice Link model.

They are recruiting an

Advice Partnership Administrator

1-year fixed term contract

Part Time Salary: £9828 per annum for 21 hours per week

Interested?: <http://www.jobstoday.co.uk/job/300569/advice-network-administrator/>

Big Lottery Fund Project 2009 to 2014 Advice Plus Round 2 - Final report



The Big Lottery Fund “Advice Plus” Project and Blackpool Council funding sustained the Network in Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde until 2014.

The “Advice Plus” Project ended 30.6.14 and the final reports are being submitted.

Between 2009 and 2014 Big Lottery Fund funding contributed to the costs of:

- Network meetings and annual conference
- Network advisers’ toolkit
- Specialist and Problem Noticer training
- Extension and development of signposting and referrals
- “Where to go for advice” posters, leaflets
- Targeted events / activities where need identified-in local community venues
- Outreach / visits in Wyre and Fylde to increase access to advice

Training advisers and frontline “problem noticers”

Thanks to the Big Lottery Fund funding, Advice Link were able to provide

- ◇ over **2,332 training places for frontline workers**
- ◇ **196 courses** were delivered: 36 full day specialist and 160 basic half day

Basic courses included:

- ◇ Welfare Benefits Overview, Quality Case Recording, Money Matters, Debt, Community Stop Loan Sharks, British Sign Language, Energy Awareness, Equality in Advice

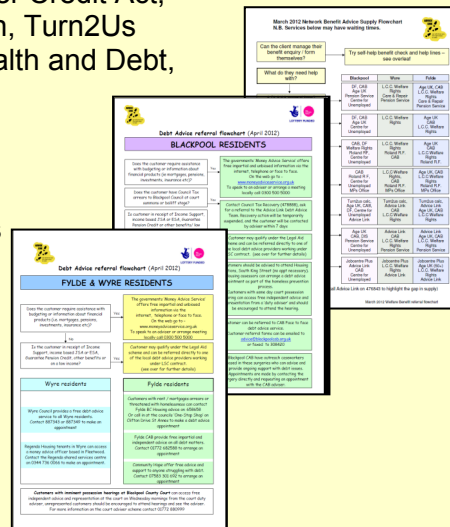
Specialist courses included:

- ◇ Employment Law, PIP, Universal Credit, Consumer Credit Act, Using QBC, Benefits for EU Nationals/ Immigration, Turn2Us Maximising Income and Grants Finder, Mental Health and Debt, Separation Rights, Dealing With Destitution

Flowcharts

The project developed flowcharts of the various services across Blackpool and Wyre & Fylde to ensure enquiries are directed to the right team at the right time and to avoid incorrect referrals for

- ◆ **Welfare Benefit advice**
- ◆ **Debt advice**
- ◆ **Housing**



Reflections on the Big Lottery Fund project 2009 – 2014

Conferences

During this time, partners benefited from over **60 hours of training** and networking at the Spring and Annual conferences.

Conference feedback included:

- * *'Networking opportunity / exchange of information / sharing good practice'*
- * *'Learned more about personal budgets / great info on welfare reform / PIP'*
- * *'Did not realise how many organisations there were trying to help our clients'*
- * *'I will be able to provide a better service to my clients'*



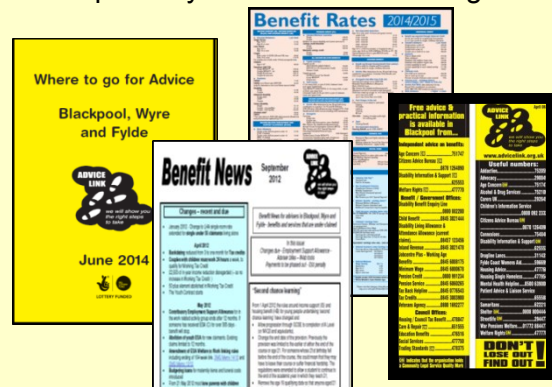
NAWRA 2013

We were able to host the **NAWRA Annual Conference** - <http://www.nawra.org.uk/>
 The National Association of Welfare Rights Advisers (NAWRA) Conference - in June 2013 at The Winter Gardens, Blackpool.
 That was attended by 113 delegates and National and local Speakers/workshop topics included:
 Welfare benefit reform and mental health Issues, housing size criteria and new rules for appeals

Tools and toolkits

The funding made possible production of advice tools and publicity for services including:

- Benefit Rates
- Where to go for advice—posters, bookmarks and leaflets
- Taking Control of Your Money
- Adviser toolkits on ESA, sanctions and appeals
- Benefit News issue 32 to 53
- Advice Link News issue 15 to 32
- Money Advice Extra issue 9 to 19



Reflections on the Big Lottery Fund project 2009 – 2014

Advice Weeks and other advice sessions and events

In this period the team arranged

- ◆ **73 advice sessions** and events
- ◆ including the **C£eck before it C£anges Welfare Reform campaign** and
- ◆ **5 ‘Advice Weeks’** with over **1416** members of the public attending.
- ◆ Potential customer **cash gains amounted to £725,462.24**

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## Outreach work funded by Big Lottery Fund

Thanks to the Big Lottery Fund funding,

**775 new contacts were made by the outreach worker across the Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde area, resulting in income increases of nearly £2 million.**

The Project Outreach Worker provided improved access to advice for residents in outlying areas or unable to attend advice offices when few organisations provide an home visiting service. Partners have been able to make referrals to the Outreach Advice Service for those individuals who may be housebound and/or socially isolated and in need of information and advice. The Big Lottery Fund project has enabled the outreach worker to make over 722 visits and appointments to those who could not attend an advice centre.

100% of respondents in year 5 when questioned about the outreach work said they were happy or very happy with the service and over 90% indicated that they felt better or much better about their situation having seen an adviser.

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Advice Link Direct Advice round up

Between 2005 – 2014 thanks to various funders, dedicated Advice Link advice staff were employed in debt and welfare benefit advice and

- ◆ ***gave detailed advice to over 5,400 residents of Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde***
- ◆ ***handled over 10,800 separate issues***
- ◆ ***took enquiries about over £9.9 million of debt***
- ◆ ***secured over £6.9 million of extra income for those residents and the local economy.***
- ◆ ***won an IMA Debt Advice award 2009, Blackpool Council Outstanding Achievement award 2010, AQS Advice Quality Standard 2013.***



Current Big Lottery Fund support: Advice Services Transition Fund



A partnership bid submitted in January 2013 to the Big Lottery Fund Advice Services Transition Fund for Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde secured Advice Services Transition Fund grant for £350k over 2 years.

The (not for profit) partners are

- ◆ Age Uk Lancs
- ◆ AgeUk Blackpool
- ◆ Blackpool Citizens Advice Bureau
- ◆ Blackpool Centre for the Unemployed
- ◆ Disability First
- ◆ Fylde Citizens Advice Bureau
- ◆ Lancashire West Citizens Advice Bureaux

The funding is to helping these advice services address:

- business transformation
- digital and other advice channels and
- community capability / prevention

Blackpool Citizens Advice Bureau is managing this project.

Contact: Julia Hannaford,
Blackpool Citizens Advice Bureau
01253 308410
julia.hannaford@blackpoolcab.org.uk

What to expect.....

Business as usual until the end of September

but keep an eye on your e mails for the invitation to sign up with the new host by 30.9.14.

(We can't just hand over your details due to data protection!!)

From 1.9.14 to enable handover from Advice Link team to the new host - mail list members will receive an individual e mail and be asked to sign up with new host by 30.9.14



Advice Link is here for advisers across Blackpool, Wyre & Fylde

Tel: 01253 476843
Fax: 01253 477766
Website:
<http://advicelink.weebly.com>
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