

# Quids for Kids

## Good Practice Examples

The good practice examples are split into the following sections:

1. Work with Children's Centres
2. Help with school costs
3. Into-work campaigns
4. Tax credit take-up
5. Childcare costs
6. Children with disabilities
7. Housing and council tax benefits services
8. Young people leaving care

### 1. Work with Children's Centres

#### London Borough of Barnet

##### Objectives

To:

- Reduce child poverty
- Improve parental support services and information services
- Improve access to affordable, quality childcare options
- Increase number of parents moving into training or employment or staying in training or employment
- Improving service to families with disabled child/ren.

##### Target groups

Main target group are families where there is a child under 5 years.

##### How was it funded?

The project was initially funded for 3 years (part time adviser – 30 hours pw) from Sure Start - £25,000 pa in 2006 the funding increased to £46,000 pa to cover appointment for additional worker

Now year on year funding – increased to cover 2 full time posts and on costs from London Borough of Barnet – via funding from the Department for Children, Schools and Families, standing at £77,000 p a (covers salaries, training, travel and publicity).

##### How is it run?

Outreach work is provided through joint sessions with Children's Information Service, Jobcentre Plus, and Parent Partnership.

London Borough of Barnet Welfare Rights Unit set up the project after funding was secured from Sure Start in 2004 to provide a part time outreach WR adviser to provide advice to parents of children in Barnet's two Sure Start areas (Underhill and West Hendon). In 2006 the project appointed an additional adviser as Sure Start grew to incorporate the whole of Barnet. A drop-in outreach service is provided to all of Barnet's thirteen Children's

Centres as well as a referral service to professionals working with children in Barnet – social workers, health visitors, pre-school teachers. Three fact sheets/leaflets are produced for parents each year to cover families and benefits, maternity rights and benefits and benefits for parents of a disabled child.

### **Impact**

Since November 2004 the project has raised over £500,000 in extra benefits and tax credits for families and has seen over 350 families at the centres and via referral. The project has two full time advisers and with roll out of a further nine Children's Centres are looking to appoint a further adviser.

### **Lessons Learned**

- Good clear lines of communication established with Children's Services, staff at the Children's Centres. More regular information/training sessions for Children Centre Staff – so that they are more aware of and can identify parents and centre users who may benefit from accessing the service.

### **Contact**

Kate Green, Children's Centre Welfare Rights Adviser, LB Barnet, [kate.green@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:kate.green@barnet.gov.uk), Kieran Lynch, Manager, Welfare Rights Unit, LB Barnet [kieran.lynch@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:kieran.lynch@barnet.gov.uk)

---

## **2. Help with school costs**

### **London Borough of Greenwich**

#### **Objective**

To raise awareness of help with school costs.

#### **Target Groups**

Parents of Greenwich school children

#### **How was it funded?**

Greenwich Council Children's Services

#### **How was it run?**

Each September all school children in the London Borough of Greenwich take home a 'Benefits for Children at school' leaflet. The leaflet is produced jointly by the Council's Welfare Rights Service, Children's Services including Pupil Benefits Service, and covers the full range of assistance for families, including free school meals, the council's clothing grants scheme and education maintenance allowances. It gives the Welfare Rights Services' telephone advice line.

**Impact**

This leaflet campaign resulted in wider awareness of benefits available. Approximately 5000 school clothing grants are paid to low income families each year.

**Contact:**

Jane Hayball, Principal Welfare Rights Adviser, London Borough of Greenwich, email: jane.hayball@greenwich.gov.uk

---

**3. Into-work campaigns**

Projects featured:

- LB Southwark: partnerships with job brokers
- East London City Strategy Pilot, Newham Mayor's Employment Pilot
- East London City Strategy Pilot, Greenwich Local Labour and Business
- LB Camden: supporting parents into training and work

**London Borough of Southwark****Name of project**

'Southwark Works' is the London Borough of Southwark's employment initiative that has pioneered some very close co-operation between the local authority and the local Employment Zone provider.

**Objectives**

The 'Southwark Works' campaign 'Rightfully Yours' focused on:

- Helping working families with childcare costs
- Tackling lone parent worklessness and child poverty
- Tackling financial exclusion

**Target group**

The 'More for Me and My Kids' initiative was targeted at lone parents.

**How was it funded?**

London Borough of Southwark

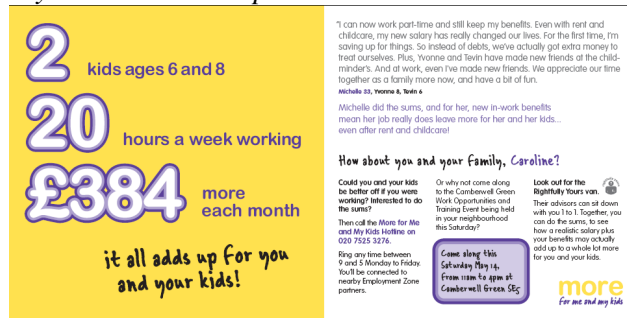
**How it was run**

More For Me and My Kids (MFMK) is the title adopted for the Tackling Lone Parent Worklessness strand of the Rightfully Yours initiative. MFMK was launched in spring 2005 and supported the aims of Southwark's Employment Strategy and Employment Zone partners by:

- i) Using detailed data held by the Council's Revenues and Benefit Service on some 8000 workless lone parents (without compromising customer confidentiality);

- ii) Developing a carefully tailored campaign to promote the message that work pays for lone parents;
- iii) Using targeted direct mail to get that message out to workless lone parents and including a hotline number for lone parents to contact local EZ providers.

*Flyer aimed at lone parents*



**Impact**

In the first year of the MFMK initiative some three thousand lone parents were contacted. The response rate to the mail out in terms of attendance at neighbourhood based events and calls to the hot line was in the range of 15% - 20% and, one year on, evaluation of the campaign revealed that 325 of those contacted had since made the transition to sustainable full-time work or training. Others have moved off income support or have engaged with Employment Zone employment programmes. This campaign contributed to raising the take-up of working tax credit and child tax credit in Southwark.

3,839 lone parent households in receipt of income support, identified from housing benefit records, were direct mailed between May 2005 and September 2005 with information publicising Employment Zone services and family fun day events in their locality (based on Neighbourhood Renewal Areas) at which they could find out more.

Of the 3,839 households contacted it was found that 426 (11.1%) were no longer claiming IS in April 2006 though of these 213 were still claiming HB as part of a package of in work benefits.

The control group was made up of 4,663 lone parents in receipt of IS who had not been direct mailed during 2005. Among this group it was found that 350 (7.5%) were no longer claiming IS in April 2006 though, of these, 239 were still claiming HB as part of a package of in work benefits.

No further evaluation was carried out but the Council's benefit service has continued to facilitate direct mailings to lone parent households to publicise Employment Zone services recently when a mailing was targeted at those lone parents directly affected by the rule changes under which lone parents with children aged 12 and under are required to be available for work.

The Council's benefit service also has an SLA with Employment Zone providers, which has been highlighted by London Development Agency as an example of good practice.

### **Lessons Learned**

The key finding was that the evidence suggested that MFMK had made a difference and the campaign was extended for another year. The increase in employment rates was higher for the group of lone parents assisted than the control group by 4%.

### **Contact:**

Eugene Nixon, Benefits Manager, London Borough of Southwark, email: Eugene.Nixon@southwark.gov.uk

## **East London City Strategy Pilot**

The London Development Agency (LDA) is a member of the consortia developing the two London City Strategy Pathfinders (CSP), a Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) initiative looking at the reform of the welfare system. There are 15 UK Pathfinders in total, each tasked with designing and testing new ways to deliver welfare services, to contribute to an 80% national employment target, and eradication of child poverty by 2020

Two boroughs in the East London City Strategy pilot, Newham and Greenwich, both have the following employment initiatives, which incorporate benefit and tax credit take-up.

## **LB Newham: the Mayor's Employment Project**

### **Objectives**

To tackle benefit dependency and fear of being "worse off working".

### **Target groups**

Groups that need intensive support to get back to work, including the very long term unemployed (3 years plus), workless households, parents and carers.

### **How is it funded?**

The Mayor's Employment Project is funded via Working Neighbourhood Fund and Section 106.

### **How is it run?**

Newham Council have incorporated significant benefit advice and guidance into their employment and training one-stop-shop, Workplace. The Council have contracted with East End Citizens Advice Bureau to provide a benefits and advice service, and have also incorporated internal housing benefit officers into the employment support team, to offer better-off calculations for

new jobseekers and assistance to claim into-work benefits and tax credits when they find a job. Residents are guaranteed that they will not be worse off working.

- Five experienced HB Officers are employed by the local authority to work exclusively with groups that need intensive support to get back to work, including the very long-term unemployed (3 years plus), workless households, parents and carers. They are based in-house at Workplace and in community locations across the borough including Children's Centres and libraries.
- A Citizen's Advice Bureau adviser offers independent, impartial advice on in-work benefits, debt and legal issues.
- The team has been trained to deliver advice about benefits which has a 'back to work' emphasis; encouraging candidates to consider the positive impact that working would have on their household income.

Financial support available:

- Flexible funding that is tailored to the individual (where other funding is not accessible) to cover costs associated with entering work such as travel, equipment and training.
- "In work" payments to the individual. A reward is offered to encourage participants through the first few weeks of work, which is paid after 13 weeks in employment.
- A guaranteed HB top-up is available to those who find themselves worse off by returning to work, which is offered for up to one year.
- Funding for out of school childcare for children over the age of five, which extends the London Development Agency Childcare Affordability Programme for children under the age of five. Childcare is funded for up to six weeks when a parent starts work to bridge the gap between signing off benefits and being having working tax credit awarded
- Funding for childcare for up to three months in any calendar year is available for parents participating in voluntary work or unpaid work experience.

### **Impact**

From November 2007 to October 2008 110 residents moved into work of which:

- 66 (60%) were unemployed for over 3 years
- 28 (25%) are lone parents
- 34 (31%) are parents
- 59 (65%) live in a workless household
- 83 (75%) were still in employment at 13 weeks

On average, beneficiaries have been over £80 per week better off when they return to work. No one has been worse off working. This is due to the holistic benefit support available, ensuring that beneficiaries claim and are awarded all the in-work benefits to which they are entitled.

Contact: Rose.Rolle-Rowan Senior Regeneration Officer - Employment Initiatives, LB Newham.  
Rose.Rolle-Rowan@newham.gov.uk

## **Greenwich Local Labour and Business**

The Single Points of Access (SPA) Pilot is one element of the overall South East London City Strategy Pilot delivering outreach on a borough wide level, bringing services to people and ensuring accessibility for all.

### **Objectives**

Integrated advice and support on employment, benefits and tax credits.

### **Target groups**

Families attending Children's Centres.

### **How is it funded?**

City Strategy government funding.

### **How is it run?**

Children's Centres are the primary locations for outreach delivery and support the ethos of integrated support and advice. Over 32 outreach sites including Children's Centres are hosting the delivery of intensive personalised employment support by dedicated employment advisers.

A financial literacy course - Making the Most of your Money - has been developed through identifying that lack of financial knowledge and debt management is a significant barrier to work. The course has proved extremely successful in increasing awareness of support and advice available for residents.

Financial support available:

- 'Advisor Discretionary Fund' is available for customers to overcome barriers when moving towards and into employment, this includes training and volunteering.
- Customised Training offer to customers wishing to change career direction or up-skill.
- Reimbursement of travel costs once customer has completed 4 weeks in employment.
- Access to high street gift vouchers or travel fare costs upon securing employment

Strong partnership work with Families Information Service allows a seamless route to accessing the Childcare Affordability Programme funding.

### **Welfare Benefit Support**

Greenwich recognised that ensuring people had information about benefits and tax credits, and support with claims, was key to a successful move towards and into work.

GLLaB and the Council's Welfare Rights Service have therefore begun close joint working and a programme of training and information for frontline staff, plus a commitment to offering all clients 'Better Off in Work' calculations, commenced this year.

A benefits worker advises clients who need extra help to get their in-work benefits and tax credits into payment. In particular, ensuring that parents are able to meet childcare payments helps with a successful move into work, plus ensuring that people receive full advice about the range of additional benefits (such as the In Work Credit and extended payments of housing benefit and council tax benefit) that some claimants miss out on.

Close engagement with the local Jobcentre Plus office has also been a key element of this work, and specialist support from the Welfare Rights Service for the frontline advisers means that detailed calculations for individual clients can be provided.

### **Impact**

- As a result of the partnership work with Greenwich Welfare Rights Service there has been an increase in take up of the GWS BOC service by GLLaB advisers (although take up has not been as high as anticipated and GLLaB are working with their advisors to increase this)
- Based on the calculations carried out for GLLaB advisers during this financial year, customers are on average £116.37 a week better off in work.
- GLLaB has created a new post with a remit around support customers with the transition from benefits to employment to resolve any in-work benefits issues. The adviser has supported a number of customers to access tax credits, in work credit, childcare costs and housing benefit entitlement. The post holder has picked up on several benefits that people are entitled to but have not been receiving.
- There has also been an increasing number of enquiries from people coming out of work and going onto benefits due to the economic climate.

### **Lessons Learned**

An end of year external evaluation of the project is proposed and is likely to be available in the first quarter of 2009-10

### **Contacts:**

Uzma Ali, CSP Projects Officer, GLLaB, email: [u.ali@gllab.org.uk](mailto:u.ali@gllab.org.uk)

Emma Pilling, CSP Programme Manager, email: [e.pilling@gllab.org.uk](mailto:e.pilling@gllab.org.uk)

**London Borough of Camden: supporting parents into training and work**

### **Objectives**

- Assist Camden low-income parents into training, employment or volunteering

- Support Camden parents to remain in employment
- Support parents to maximize their working hours and/or their income
- Help low-income parents take up childcare places by providing information and support

... by providing information, support and advice about childcare funding, welfare benefits and childcare availability.

### **Target group**

Parents on a low income.

### **How was it funded?**

The project was funded through Camden Neighbourhood Renewal Fund.

### **How was it run**

A part-time post was created for a Project Worker who would support parents on a low income in Camden by providing advice, support and information about benefits, childcare availability and funding, and signposting to employment and training options.

The project worker worked with existing information, funding and advice sources such as Children's Information Service (CIS), Welfare Rights Team, Housing Benefit Service, Jobcentre Plus, Sure Start parent Support teams, Camden Childcare Support Fund (CCSF) as well as providers of childcare. The worker's role complemented and enhanced existing services by providing the benefits and childcare funding information expertise.

The project also developed an integrated information pack and deliver training for workers in these and other agencies regarding use of the pack, including also how to access the information to be able to keep it updated.

### **Impact**

- 66 parents were given a benefit check and/ or detailed welfare rights advice and casework support in connection with maximising their income while entering or remaining in work or training.
- 71% of parents using the service were from black and minority ethnic communities, 58% were lone parents - both groups at higher risk of poverty and worklessness than national averages.
- £65,675 was raised in total extra income for families using the services of the project.
- 7 parents were helped into new employment/ self employment.
- 6 parents were helped to remain in work.
- 15 parents were signposted to vocational training opportunities.
- 35 parents were helped to access affordable childcare provision.

- Staff from 12 local organisations/services received training on the benefits available to parents entering work and training.
- A resource pack on childcare funding streams has been produced for staff working with Camden parents.

### **Lessons learned**

- The project confirmed the need for a service that centred on finances related to childcare and provision of support during the transition into employment.
- It was felt that a full-time equivalent worker would be better able not only to maintain a caseload but also to talk to parent groups and organisations working with parents, thereby developing a wider network for referrals.
- Benefits advice can be most effective for helping people to enter work or stay in work. It was more difficult for the project to assist those entering training due to lack of childcare funding provision.

### **Contact**

Sylvia Gilbert, Team Manager, Welfare Rights Service, Early Years and Sure Start Service, London Borough of Camden, email: [sylvia.gilbert@camden.gov.uk](mailto:sylvia.gilbert@camden.gov.uk)

## **4. Tax Credit take-up**

Projects featured:

- Selby District Citizens Advice Bureau
- Brent Citizens Advice Bureau

### **Selby District Citizens Advice Bureau Tax Credit Take Up Campaign**

#### **Objectives**

To increase the take up of tax credits within Selby District.

#### **Groups targeted**

Young parents, migrant workers, families on a low income.

#### **How was it funded?**

Funding was received from HMRC in partnership with the national governing body Citizens Advice. Selby District CAB receives £12,000 per year.

#### **How was it run?**

One part-time advice worker (16 hours a week) was employed. Partners include Sure Start, Connexions, local employers, and medical centres. The service offers checks on entitlement and help with claims and has been advertised through press releases, posters dual language questionnaires etc.

#### **Impact**

In the last 6 month campaign from December 2007 to May 2008 the estimated amount of new tax credits generated was £165,237. In the current campaign

17 clients have been assisted since the start of July 08 who have English as a second language. Four of these returned the dual language questionnaires. Posters in Polish have been distributed to workplaces, medical centres and Polish shops but we haven't monitored how many clients have directly come from these sources.

### **Lessons Learned**

Working with Sure Start works well and we have also built up a steady throughput of enquiries from migrant workers; this has been successful, as we have approached local employers to access this client group. The biggest gains appear to be from these groups.

### **Contact**

Steve Allitt, Selby District Citizens Advice Bureau, Tax Credit take Up Campaign Worker, email: [steve.allitt@selbycab.org.uk](mailto:steve.allitt@selbycab.org.uk)

## **Brent CAB**

### **Name of take up project**

Tax Credit Take up Campaign.

### **Objectives of the take up project**

Tax Credit take-up in London Borough of Brent.

### **Target group**

People on a low income, particularly BME communities.

### **How was it funded and how much did it cost?**

HMRC provided funding of £20k over two periods of 5 months (10 months total).

### **How was it run?**

Tax Credit assessments were run by advisers at all advice sessions in November 2007-May 2008, with special emphasis on child tax credit in 12 Children's Centres. Awareness sessions took place with parents and staff at Children's Centres.

Regular articles were placed in Brent CAB quarterly newsletter (1000 circulation) and Brent Magazine free newspaper (free to all Brent households) and a talk on Life FM (community radio). Leaflets were distributed in English, Urdu, Gujarati, Punjabi and Bengali. Eight 'one-to-many' information sessions were delivered at Brent Council's Language2Work (migrant workers), Portage Parents and Carers Support (children with disabilities), Somali Carers Support Group, The Willow Children's Centre (parents) and Work Directions (lone parents). In total 150 attended.

### **Impact**

£660,000 gained for Brent residents over 10 months.

## **Lessons Learned**

Communication went very well. Externally to partners and the general public (newsletter, local newspapers) and internally (advisers were made aware on a weekly basis of gains made).

However, different audiences react at different rates. We are still getting requests for tax credits work a long time after campaign came to an end. How do you mainstream such a campaign?

## **Contact**

Fernando Ruz, Project Manager, Brent CAB, email: [f.ruz@brentcab.co.uk](mailto:f.ruz@brentcab.co.uk)

---

## **5. Childcare costs**

Projects featured:

- Daycare Trust
- Hertfordshire County Council

### **Daycare Trust**

#### **Name of Project**

Parent Champions.

#### **Objectives**

To increase awareness amongst parents of childcare services and help with childcare costs.

#### **Target group**

Parents using childcare services and those considering using childcare services.

#### **How was it funded**

The project was funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, and was managed by the Daycare Trust.

#### **How was it run?**

During the 6 month trial project, August 2007-March 2008 a group of 12 parents became Parent Champions. They used outreach skills to engage with other parents and speak about their own positive experiences of childcare, and of ways of overcoming barriers to accessing services.

The Daycare Trust 'Paying for Childcare' website [www.payingforchildcare.org.uk](http://www.payingforchildcare.org.uk) helps parents understand the different types of financial support to help with the costs of childcare including help through working tax credit

#### **Impact**

1809 parents found out more about childcare and at least 75 began using childcare, including in hard-to-reach communities targeted in the three London boroughs who participated in the pilot, Tower Hamlets, Newham and Camden.

### **Lessons Learned**

The project demonstrated that parents appreciated the information that Parent Champions provided about finding local childcare and getting help with childcare costs. They trusted the Parent Champions because they were also parents, many of whom had similar experiences. Parents also appreciated the support provided: Parent Champions helped other parents to feel confident enough to use local childcare.

### **Contact:**

Emma Knights and Alison Garnham, Joint Chief Executive, Daycare Trust, email: [chiefexecutive@daycaretrust.org.uk](mailto:chiefexecutive@daycaretrust.org.uk)

## **Hertfordshire County Council**

### **Name of take up project**

Childcare costs.

### **Objectives**

- Provide advice and information to parents about the different types of help available with childcare costs.
- Provide information and training to professionals to help them advise parents re help with childcare costs.
- Help maximise family income through encouraging take up of benefits and tax credits amongst low income families
- Encourage take up of in-work benefits, to promote a smooth transition, for those moving off benefits and into work
- Encourage take up of in-work benefits for those in lower paid work
- Encourage take up of formal childcare and childcare element of WTC by working families on a low income.

### **Target groups**

- Families on a low income, particularly parents who are thinking of returning to work and those in lower-paid work
- Professionals who are working with these families.

### **How was it funded and how much did it cost?**

Cost of leaflet funded by Families Information Service.  
Other work supported by Money Advice Unit core funding.

### **How was it run?**

Run by Hertfordshire County Council Money Advice Unit (MAU) in partnership with the Family Information Service, children's centres, childcare affordability campaign, health and voluntary organisations.

## **Impact**

### **1. Information**

5000 copies of, leaflet 'Help with Childcare Costs' are distributed per year. This is targeted at people who use Children's Centres as well as employees of major local employers (NHS, local councils etc). A range of other information also provided to families and professionals including Benefits for Carers, Families and Benefits, Maternity and Benefits and Benefits for Children with a Disability which are distributed widely throughout the county. This information is also available electronically on the unit's web channel [www.hertsdirect.org.uk/benefits](http://www.hertsdirect.org.uk/benefits), along with other information about benefits and links to useful sites.

### **2. Training**

A number of training courses have been developed and provided to a variety of professionals and volunteers including courses on tax credits, maternity benefits and childcare costs, benefits when going back to work. Further support is provided via the unit's daily telephone and e-mail Advice Line service.

### **3. Advice**

Talks, information and drop-in sessions about family benefits, childcare and benefits, maternity and benefits, in-work benefits have been provided to parents/carers, prospective parents, young parents, ante and post natal groups in a number of settings including Children's Centres.

Advisers from Money Advice Unit have also supported local HCC, CIS and NHS childcare initiatives, providing workers with information about in-work benefits, including tax credits, maternity and benefits and childcare costs.

This work involves basic advice and signposting, as opposed to on-going casework assistance to claim benefits so no measures for tax credits/benefits claimed etc. Numbers of parents provided with advice are monitored, eg - 82 parents were provided with information during Childcare Affordability fortnight. Tools are currently being developed to measure success in this type of 'drop in' information session work, eg - number of venues visited, number of parents provided with information, number of parents provided with advice, number of parents signposted for further assistance, type of information/advice given etc

## **Lessons learned**

1. Information sessions work best where local effort and knowledge has been input beforehand, eg - by a Children's Centre manager, to ascertain what specific advice local service users need. It also seems to help if there are other events on, particularly for children.

2. There is a need to develop meaningful tools to monitor success in this type of work.

3. Some people need more ongoing one-to-one advice and assistance to claim tax credits and benefits on a casework basis and help with liaising with the various agencies. The provision of in-depth meaningful 'back to work' calculations requires time and a private space, which is not always available in 'drop in' type events.

4. A MAU Children's Plan draws together the different types of work with families, to develop a strategy for increasing MAU's work with children and families and to maximise use of MAU services by Herts Children's Trust partnership members and CSF staff. This was reviewed half way through the year and was useful in helping to focus MAU services more firmly on the child poverty agenda.

### **Contact**

Bernie O'Gorman. Senior Adviser, Money Advice Unit, Hertfordshire County Council. 01438 843592, [bernie.o'gorman@hertscc.gov.uk](mailto:bernie.o'gorman@hertscc.gov.uk)

---

## **6. Children with disabilities**

Projects featured:

- London Borough of Camden
- Devon CAB
- Newcastle Welfare Rights
- Hertfordshire County Council
- London Borough of Croydon

### **London Borough of Camden**

#### **The Camden Disabled Children's Benefit Partnership**

##### **Objectives**

The Camden Disabled Children's Benefit Partnership (DCBP) was established in April 2006, set up to achieve specific outcomes for the Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) agreed between central government and Camden Council.

The aims of the partnership are to maximise benefit take up for families with disabled children in Camden.

##### **Target groups**

Camden families across the borough with disabled children who have physical and/or mental disabilities.

##### **How was it funded?**

The additional caseworker for the campaign was funded through Local Public Service Agreement funding.

##### **How was it run?**

Partnership agencies in Camden agreed to work together to offer information and advice on disability benefits, to help parents to complete disability living allowance (DLA) claim forms on behalf of their children and to claim other related benefits and services.

The Disabled Children's Benefit Partnership (DCBP) includes the following agencies:

- Camden Council Welfare Rights Advisers from the Children, School and Families Team as well as the Housing and Adult and Social Care Teams
- Camden Disabled Children's Team
- DISC – Disability in Camden
- KIDS
- Camden and Islington Primary Care Trust and the Royal Free Trust (Community Nursing).

The DCBP has been led and coordinated by the LB Camden Children, School and Families (CSF) Welfare Rights Team. A senior adviser from the team is responsible for co-ordinating the services of the wider partnership and gathering the information needed for monitoring performance outcomes from all agencies. In addition, the team employs one dedicated full-time caseworker, working solely with families with disabled children.

### **Impact**

- **DCBP Partnership Agencies**

For the first two years of the partnership (April 2006 - March 2008) the following outcomes were achieved by partnership agencies

- 102 new awards or renewal awards of any DLA component for a Camden child. (PI 1)
- 92 cases of an increase in the amount of an existing DLA component, any award of a related benefit or access to a related service for a Camden child/family. (PI 2)

- **Outcomes - DCBP Welfare Rights Team (Children, Schools and Families)**

For the first two years (2006 -2008) Camden Council's Welfare Rights Team achieved a total of 49 PI 1 and 36 PI 2 outcomes, contributing significantly to the performance indicators for the whole partnership. Over this period the team received 217 referrals for welfare rights advice. A total of 154 clients were seen for help or advice, (mainly in-depth welfare rights casework) with the remaining 63 parents referred or signposted for help and assistance from another service. Total extra annual income raised for these families seen by the Welfare Rights Team over the two year period was £596,136 in additional benefits and tax credits. A significant number of families were also helped to obtain the blue badge for parking and assisted to access other services to support well-being.

- **Other outcomes**

- Increased awareness of DLA and associated benefits amongst staff and advisers across Camden has been achieved through publicity and training sessions. This has led to timely referrals for families who need help with their benefits. This ensures that the family have financial support as early as possible, so preventing potential child poverty.
- Increase in family income has enabled parents / carers of disabled children to access / take advantage of respite / leisure facilities.

- The work has contributed to closing the gap in learning for children with special needs compared to other children. Increased income has enabled families to take advantage of learning opportunities and to buy resources for their learning such as computers, educational toys and books etc.
- The partnership has promoted inter-agency working by establishing effective joint working arrangements and contributing to multi-agency support. Families have received a holistic service, utilising the different skills and expertise of the different partners.
- The partnership has worked closely with Childcare Affordability Programme (CAP) and the Employability Services (EYSSS) to provide advice and support on childcare funding and helping parents / carers with disabled children to make informed decisions about work and training opportunities.

Expertise has been gained in the particular benefit issues facing these families. The caseworker and the co-ordinator from Camden Welfare Rights Team (CSF) are viewed as specialists by other agencies. Certain policy issues have also been addressed and problems with procedures raised with HMRC (Tax Credit Office) and the Department for Work and Pensions.

### **Lessons learned**

- A small "central" service (with a dedicated welfare rights caseworker post and a co-ordinator), working alongside a wider partnership, and incorporating integrated working with other professionals, is an effective model for supporting the economic well being of families with disabled children.
- Through evaluation, parents clearly indicated that they would prefer to return for further benefits advice to the adviser/service that they had initially seen (and trusted) rather than "start again" with a new service. This requires advisers to be available to provide advice to families for a length of time, rather than open and close cases quickly. To provide this sort of holistic, longer-term service to each family is time consuming and this was not fully appreciated in the initial design of the partnership or reflected in the LPSA performance indicators.
- A number of clients have been missing out on benefits available to them for a long time and could have claimed months, sometimes years, earlier. This indicates a need for more information generally and an earlier referral system for benefits advice for families already in contact with other professionals.
- This project is targeted at families with children aged 16 years or less. However, there is clearly an increased need for benefits advice for young disabled people age 16 –19 years. A future partnership/ project could address this.

**Contact**

Sylvia Gilbert, Team Manager, Welfare Rights Service, Early Years and Sure Start Service, London Borough of Camden, email: sylvia.gilbert@camden.gov.uk

**Devon CAB****Quids for Special Kids****Objectives**

Increasing benefit take-up for families with children with special needs or disabilities registered on the Joint Health and Social Care Agency registers across the county of Devon.

**Target groups**

All families registered on the Joint Agency register of families with children with special needs or disabilities in Devon. There are approximately 2,500 children on the register. The service was also made available to any family with a child aged up to 21 through partner agencies publicising the service and press releases in local press.

**How is it funded?**

The first phase of the project 2005 - 2008 was funded through Round 2 of Local Public Service Agreement funds through Devon County Council at a total cost of £170,000.

The project has been extended until 2011 through the Strong and Inclusive Communities strand of the Devon Local Area Agreement and Devon Sustainable Community Strategy Priority at a cost of £103,000 per year. The increased funding level allows for locally based project adviser posts to be established in Citizens Advice Bureaux across the county during 2008 – 2011. It is planned that the service will be mainstreamed into Devon Children's Services as a core activity from April 2011 onwards.

**How is it run?**

The work was implemented through the Access to Benefits Implementation Group by a Steering Group, comprising key partner agencies, parents and elected councillors.

The project was delivered through a partnership agreement between Devon County Council and Citizens Advice (Devon Welfare Rights Unit). Also, there was a multi agency steering group overseeing and monitoring the project, including representation from:

- Devon County Council
- Citizens Advice (Devon Welfare Rights Unit)
- North Devon Carers Forum
- Citizens Advice Bureaux
- Sure Start
- Connexions

- Jobcentre Plus
- Primary Care Trust
- HMRC
- Devon Energy Efficiency
- Officer and elected members of City, District, Borough and County councils.

Each family has been individually contacted and offered a home visit to carry out a comprehensive household income and benefits maximisation service. Devon CAB Welfare Rights Unit provided the advice service and was also responsible for overall coordination of the service and for recording and reporting on outcomes

### **Impact**

1100 families took up the service from 2005-8 and over 600 of these were assisted to claim additional benefits and tax credits totalling £2.6 million, an average annual increase in income of £4,000 per family.

The investment to benefit gain ratio has provided a return of £45 into the local economy for every £1 of original investment (with an assumption that the majority of benefits awarded are likely to remain in payment for at least 3 years).

### **Lessons learned**

- Joined-up services are a pre-requisite for delivering effective services to families with children with special needs.
- Access to work, a major difficulty for families with children with special needs, can be improved by income maximisation.
- Rurality is a key factor contributing to the social and financial exclusion of parents and carers of children with disabilities

Full details available in “Quids for special kids” Project Report, which can be obtained via the contact details below.

**Contacts:** Jude Giddings (Project Co-ordinator), Devon Welfare Rights Unit, email: [jude.giddings@citizensadvice.org.uk](mailto:jude.giddings@citizensadvice.org.uk)  
 Ian Hobbs, Community Strategy Officer, Devon County Council, [ian.hobbs@devon.gov.uk](mailto:ian.hobbs@devon.gov.uk)

## **Newcastle Welfare Rights**

### **Name of take up Project**

Quids for Kids.

### **Objectives**

Maximisation of income for children and families across Newcastle.

### **Target groups**

- All families known to the Children with Disabilities social work team.

- Children known to the Learning Disabilities team.
- All families of children undergoing transition interviews at Sir Charles Parsons School – a special needs secondary school.
- All parents receiving a disabled child premium as part of their housing benefit assessment.
- Leaflets on benefits available to families given to all families registering a birth at Newcastle Registrars.
- Parents of babies on the Special Care Baby Unit.
- Children diagnosed with diabetes via the paediatric diabetic nurses.
- Lone parent employment events run by Newcastle Futures.
- For the past year one welfare rights officer dealing specifically with foster carers, young people leaving care and unaccompanied minors.

### **How was it funded?**

Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (NRF) was achieved for the first 4 years. This started with funding for one welfare rights officer and half an administrative post – about £43,000 per year for the first 3 years.

Funding was then received for an extra post from the Carers Grant, another £30,000 for the past 3 years.

NRF then funded a specialist post to work with foster carers and the leaving care team.

Funding of £78,242 from the Working Neighbourhoods Fund will continue the project for 2008-2011, as well as ongoing funding of the children's carers post. Total funding will be about £110,000.

### **How was it run?**

The Quids for Kids Project is part of Newcastle Welfare Rights Service, which is part of Newcastle City Council. There are 25 Welfare Rights Officers in the whole service.

The Quids for Kids project has informal links with a number of voluntary groups including the special needs network, several school/ parent groups.

### **Impact**

Over the past 4 years parents have gained over £1,855,000 in annualised benefit gains and £234,708 in arrears.

### **Lessons Learned**

This was a successful approach, which has been mainstreamed with continued funding.

### **Contact**

Rosemary Bell, Senior Welfare Rights Officer, Newcastle City Council Welfare Rights  
[Rosemary.bell@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:Rosemary.bell@newcastle.gov.uk)

**Name of take up project**

Children with Disabilities Benefit Take-Up Project.

**Objectives**

To improve the lives of disabled children and their families in Hertfordshire by increasing their benefit income, thus reducing poverty and debt.

**Target groups**

Families with children who may be eligible for disability living allowance (DLA) and carer's allowance (CA).

**How was it funded?**

Total funding: £63,751 pa (£36,571 from Children, Schools and Families and £27,180 from Carers Grant). Covers costs of two part-time welfare benefits advisers and two part-time interviewers.

**How was it run?**

Run by Hertfordshire County Council Money Advice Unit as a service level agreement with Children, Schools and Families. It was run in partnership with children's services, schools, (including special and EBD Schools), health services and the voluntary sector.

Referrals come from a wide variety of sources including parents and carers themselves, parent support groups, disability specific support groups, foster carers, schools, social workers, occupational therapists, health visitors, paediatricians, Herts parent partnership, Children's Centres, the Money Advice Unit advice line, hospices, voluntary organisations, eg - Carers in Herts, CAB etc.

Help includes form filling, follow-up advocacy and representation up to social security commissioners (Upper Tribunal) level. Advice is given on a wide range of other benefits, including income support and tax credits.

Talks, training and targeted information was provided to families, carers and professionals in Children, Schools and Families, health and voluntary organisations.

**Impact**

### 1. Extra Benefits

The project assists around 350 families per year to claim DLA, CA and associated benefits. Around £1.25 million a year. is raised in additional income for these families. This figure is also cumulative, as additional benefit gained in earlier years will still generally be paid in subsequent years. So the overall annual gain after 8 years of the project is likely to be more than £10m a year.

Parents' feedback shows that increased benefits income helps to alleviate a major area of stress in family life and enables them to provide a healthier lifestyle for their children thus promoting positive health outcomes for both carers and those they care for.

The project helps to meet targets on reducing child poverty and assisting families to maximise their 'in work' and 'out of work' benefit income. It also demonstrates the way that DLA is a key tool in tackling poverty in these families.

### 2. Information

The project provides information to families and professionals in its factsheet 'Benefits for Children with a Disability' which is distributed widely throughout the county. This information is also available electronically on the unit's web channel [www.hertsdirect.org.uk/benefits](http://www.hertsdirect.org.uk/benefits), along with other information about benefits and links to other useful sites.

The project has provided articles for in-house publications (eg - for those on the Herts Additional Needs Register and Herts Parent Partnership) and local voluntary organisations' specialist publications. Advice has also been given over the telephone to a large number of parents and carers as well as to professional workers.

### 3. Talks and Training

Talks and awareness training have been given to a variety of professionals and parents and carers, including parents and carers of pre-school children with special needs, parents of children attending special schools, parents at local Children's Centres and support groups, parent partnership co-ordinators, teachers, health visitors, GPs.

#### • **Lessons learned**

- Referral criteria are straightforward and easy for parents, carers and professionals to understand.
- Working directly with the families of children with disabilities and helping them to complete DLA claim forms has worked particularly well. It is hard for many parents to know how to phrase answers in order to give an accurate picture of their child's disability and match that to the DLA criteria. Parents with more limited literacy or less confidence find the forms simply unmanageable.
- However, the complexity of rules re: maximum backdating of the disabled children's element in CTC can impede families. A letter is now provided to

CTC claimants for them to notify the Tax Credit Office when DLA claims are made.

- There is a need to target mainstream schools as well as special schools.
- Advice for young people re: take up of non-contributory incapacity benefit/employment and support allowance can be difficult to give due to complex 'better off' scenarios.
- There has been particular success in making claims for children and adolescents with behaviour/mental health problems and those with learning disabilities. However, getting additional supporting evidence for DLA claims from schools can be difficult, especially if a child had not been statemented. Tribunals also seem to place undue emphasis on 'statementing', which is not directly relevant to DLA criteria.

### **Contact**

Bernie O'Gorman. Senior Adviser, Money Advice Unit, Hertfordshire County Council. [bernie.o'gorman@hertsc.gov.uk](mailto:bernie.o'gorman@hertsc.gov.uk)

## **London Borough of Croydon**

### **Objectives**

Increase take up of disability living allowance for children, carer's allowance and child tax credit. Remit to reduce child poverty in the whole of Croydon Borough.

### **Target groups**

Children with disabilities and their families and carers.

### **How was it funded?**

£38,000 per year consisting of £25,000 from Croydon Council's Children Services department and £13,000 from DASH (Dept for Adult Services and Housing).

### **How was it run?**

One welfare rights adviser was recruited to work with social service staff, health service staff, special schools, health visitors, paediatricians, local nurseries etc

### **Impact**

From January 2008-September 2008 138 families have been helped to claim annual benefit entitlement of £500,000 and this will increase as more claims are decided.

### **Lessons learned**

Health service staff have been far more pro active in referring parents to the service than local authority staff. Children's social workers were initially slow to use the service and are still sporadic in referring. The summer was inevitably quieter with a deluge of work in September. Trying to get feedback on the decisions made is somewhat difficult. As DLA decisions take 13+ weeks parents simply 'forget'.

**Contact**

Carole Webster, Welfare Rights Adviser, Welfare Rights Team, Department of Adult Services and Housing, London Borough of Croydon, email:

[carole.webster@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:carole.webster@croydon.gov.uk)

---

**7. Housing and Council Tax Benefits services**

Projects featured:

- Telford and Wrekin Council
- Bassetlaw District Council (in partnership with Nottinghamshire WR)
- North Yorkshire Welfare Benefits Unit
- Easington District Council

**Telford and Wrekin Council Revenues and Benefits Services****Name of take up project**

Working Age Benefit Take-up.

**Objectives**

Increase benefit take-up by working age people.

**Target group**

Following the success of the Telford and Wrekin Pension LPSA2 project (May 2006 – March 2008), which saw Pensioner income increase by £1.9 million in the Borough it was decided to target, working-age people. Its three main areas of focus were:

- Tax credits.
- Second adult rebate.
- Free school meals.

But it also covered entitlement to other benefits including JSA, incapacity benefit, disability living allowance, housing benefit and council tax benefit.

**How was it funded?**

Initially money from the LPSA2 Fund funded the post of a welfare benefit co-ordinator. This post is now funded directly from the Revenues and Benefits department of the Council. The post is temporary up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009, although it is hoped that this may be extended based on the working-age take-up results.

### **How was it run?**

A referral scheme operates whereby partners and Council staff are informed / trained and then asked to complete a simple referral form when they come in to contact with a person who they think may be entitled to other benefits. The referrals are sent to the partnership co-ordinator who then makes contact with the customer (mostly by phone, but sometimes face-to-face) and talks through their circumstances. The co-ordinator will then calculate what extra help they may be entitled to (which is not always financial, eg - referral to community mental health team) and either helps the customer fill out the relevant forms or refers them on to the relevant agency. The co-ordinator will then keep a check on any claims made, chase them up where necessary (including speaking to the customer) and then record the result of the claim.

Referrals are received from LPSA 2 partners (Carers Contact, Health through Warmth) and from within the Council from our Benefit Assessment Team, Recovery Team, Contact Centre, Social Services etc. Community awareness events are run, eg - events in the main shopping centre and a table in local supermarket foyers. Partners are invited from the voluntary sector and other areas of the Council to attend the events in the Town Centre and encouraged to attend all community events invited to.

Currently lists of our housing benefit and council tax benefit customers are being matched with our free school meal customers to see if there are any gaps in people claiming income support. Council Tax recovery lists are being analysed and contact made with those who owe money to see if they are claiming all the benefits they are entitled to.

### **Impact**

Weekly benefits so far: council tax benefit (£35.35); tax credits ( £702.62) disability living allowance middle rate care ( £184.75). In three months this equates to £47,981.44 extra annual income so far for the Borough.

### **Lessons learned**

- It is best to run and attend events where there is a ready audience, eg - shopping centres and supermarkets, rather than going to for example a community centre where you would have to try and pull in an audience. Our experience of these has been that very few people turn up and you also have to find money for advertising.
- When the LPSA2 project was run there was a very structured approach, which played a big part in the success of the project. Quarterly operational and strategic group meetings were held. The progress was reported to the strategic group and we found that this kept the focus on the project. Although it is still early days we hope to adopt a similar approach if our working age take-up project is extended beyond March.

### **Contact details**

Rebecca Low, Benefit Control Team Manager, Telford and Wrekin Council,  
email  
Rebecca.low@telford.gov.uk

**Name of take up project**

“It’s a hand up” campaign

**Objectives**

Bassetlaw District Council produced a quick housing benefit checker, which tells the customer instantly what the maximum income cut off point is (using a spreadsheet and a simple formula which is updated every April with new rates). It is very versatile and includes pocket-sized versions and full size posters.

In April 08 it was included on a joint attendance allowance, disability living allowance, council tax benefit campaign with Welfare rights, the local Pension Service and the seven other local authorities in Nottinghamshire.

**Target group**

Any group can be targeted with tailored checkers but an example is included of the most common client groups.

**How was it funded?**

The joint campaign with Welfare Rights and Pension Service was funded in part by Welfare Rights and the remainder of the costs shared between the 8 local authorities in Nottinghamshire that took part. Radio slots were approx £4000 and each local authority then paid £250 for printing costs.

A mailshot and checker card for our working-age campaign will cost considerably less as the checkers are produced and now more easily adapted. Costs of producing tailored checkers for other local authorities is available from [Andrew.Burton@bassetlaw.gov.uk](mailto:Andrew.Burton@bassetlaw.gov.uk)

**How was it run?**

A joint strategy group was formed between local Welfare Rights in Nottinghamshire, and the local Pension Service.

Customers called BBC radio action-line who issued the information packs with a central contact centre number for Nottinghamshire. Calls were referred to the local Pension Service and welfare rights officers for follow up visits or claim assistance and results were monitored.

BBC radio action-line advertised the campaign aimed at the over 60s and disabled people in Nottinghamshire, or their carers or families. Press releases went out to local newspapers at the same time. An information pack, including the checkers was sent to them and a follow up visit arranged for those wanting help to claim.

The current campaign targets those of working age and lone parents who may have previously not been eligible and have maintenance which is now disregarded. A tailor-made checker will be sent with examples, using the

Telford and Wrekin database, whilst using posters and press releases to highlight the change in legislation and encourage new claims.

### **Impact**

There were over 500 requests for packs, but numbers following up those requests were slightly disappointing. However, an estimated £100K in additional benefits gained in Nottinghamshire that would have otherwise gone unclaimed.

### **Lessons learned**

- Radio campaign was effective but expensive.
- Joint working definitely saves on costs of printing and resource.
- Joint working with Welfare Rights and the local Pension Service has forged good relationships for future campaigns.

### **Contact**

Elaine Simmonds, Benefits Manager, Bassetlaw District Council and Notts HB Forum. [elaine.simmonds@bassetlaw.gov.uk](mailto:elaine.simmonds@bassetlaw.gov.uk)

## **North Yorkshire Welfare Benefits Unit**

### **Name of project**

Great News.

### **Objectives**

To raise awareness about the October 2008 rule in housing and council tax benefit to disregard all child maintenance.

### **Target group**

Separated parents receiving child maintenance.

### **How is it funded?**

The costs of production of the leaflets are shared nine ways by the eight local authorities and the North Yorkshire Welfare Benefits Unit. The Welfare Benefits Unit also contributes time spent at meetings, meeting space and all the co-ordination work.

### **How is it run?**

The independent North Yorkshire Welfare Benefits Unit leads it, in partnership, with all nine district councils in York and North Yorkshire. 60,000 leaflets have been distributed to child minders, nurseries, schools, Post Offices, libraries etc. The district councils are also contacting any claimants who claimed HB/CTB before the regulation change in October 2008 but were unsuccessful because their maintenance took them over the income limit.

### **Impact**

This is a recent campaign; results will be available in March 2009.

## **Lessons learned**

Experience from similar campaigns in North Yorkshire has shown the following elements make for a successful campaign:

- Leaflets need to be attractive to the target group, with great design, brief, and clarity of instruction of what to do next.
- Working in partnership with organisations that have a vested interest in the project and a commitment, for example the local authority is committed because the project ticks other boxes for them such as evidence for Beacon Status applications.
- Having a 'lead' organisation with an experienced project co-ordinator to guide, plan, facilitate, arrange meetings, keep up momentum, chase for results, write the reports etc.
- Agree in writing with partners that the results and future funding for similar projects relies on meticulous record keeping and collection of statistics, so this is essential.
- Commitment to training for first-tier workers so that the customers/clients experience is positive.

## **Contact**

Heather Theobald, Unit Co-ordinator, Welfare Benefits Unit.  
[heather.theobald@welfare-benefits-unit.org.uk](mailto:heather.theobald@welfare-benefits-unit.org.uk)

## **Easington District Council**

Easington have produced a DVD to promote claiming benefits and accessing help from the Housing Benefit service.

## **Objectives**

To address low levels of literacy.

## **Target groups**

Potential housing and council tax benefit claimants with low literacy levels.

## **How it was run?**

Easington Council did some research and found that a high proportion of residents had literacy problems and produced a corporate DVD sent to all residents giving info on all services across the district.

The DVD is used at all presentations and take-up events as a backdrop to an information desk with leaflets etc. giving balloons and pens to interested people, This is usually done in conjunction with partners: DWP; Age Concern; Welfare Rights; CAB; Warm Homes Campaign etc

The DVD has been passed to service providers as well as groups who have responsibility for residents who we would normally expect to be eligible to apply for benefit. The DVD is sent to prospective claimants who received state benefits but not HB/CTB.

[\[link to film\]](#)

## **Contact**

Charlie Thompson, District of Easington Council's Benefit Manager, email: [Charlie.Thompson@easington.gov.uk](mailto:Charlie.Thompson@easington.gov.uk)

---

## 8. Young people leaving care

### Durham County Council Welfare Rights

#### **Name of take up project**

Welfare Rights in partnership within Children's Services.

#### **Objectives**

To work in partnership with the Young Peoples Service to maximise benefits and income of local authority care leavers and vulnerable 16 and 17-year-old children in need.

#### **Target groups**

- Local authority care leavers.
- 16 and 17 year old vulnerable children in need.

#### **How was it funded and how much did it cost?**

Funded from Durham County Council Children and Young Peoples Service.

#### **How was it run?**

Two Welfare Rights Officers supported by a Principal Welfare Rights Officer based within a multi-agency team, which includes Social Workers, Connexions Advisors, Supported Lodgings Workers.

#### **Impact**

- Developed financial procedures to ensure all care leavers receive their full entitlement to benefits and income from the local authority as outlined in the Children Leaving Care Act.
- All service users receive a benefit check when they are referred to the Young Peoples Service at 16. Welfare Rights continue their involvement with the young people until their case is closed at 21 (or 25 if in full-time education). Those young people who are entitled to benefit at 16 or 17 are assisted through the claims process. As a result the local authority makes a saving, as they no longer need to make payments of income maintenance.
- The introduction of the procedures means that all care leavers are treated equally and will receive the same amount on income from the local authority. Prior to their introduction this often depended on the social worker and the situation arose where two care leavers with the same circumstance received different amounts.
- Welfare Rights Officers attend review meetings and planning meetings to ensure that benefits are claimed at the appropriate time ensuring that the young person is not left without financial support.
- More recently Welfare Rights have been working with vulnerable children in need aged 16 and 17 who are at risk of becoming homeless. These cases are dealt with via Durham County Council Joint Protocol procedures. Welfare

Rights ensure that the family are accessing all benefits they are entitled to. In some cases this has meant that the young person has been able to stay in the family home. Where a young person is unable to stay in the family home the Welfare Rights Officer will assist the young people to access benefits etc.

- 340 cases are currently open to the Welfare Rights Officers in the Young Peoples Service. From April 2008 – November 2008 young people have been assisted to claim £88,384.

### **Lessons Learned**

In the initial stages it became apparent that different social workers were requesting varied amounts for their service users. Considerable work was required to draw the procedures together and to standardise payments.

### **Contact**

Julie Burton Principal Welfare Rights Officer, Durham County Council  
[Julie.burton@durham.gov.uk](mailto:Julie.burton@durham.gov.uk)