



Following discussion from November's membership meeting it was decided the partnership would host an Advice Week during February half term highlighting members 'business as usual'. With help from our members we were able to collect information on 55 different advice sessions being hosted throughout the week.

Overall the week was a great success; although most of the week was centred on what members did in their usual activity there were some additional events arranged;

- Durham County Council's Welfare Rights Team took to the community and visited seven foodbank sessions over the week. They were able to assist 27 people with welfare advice which could potentially secure an estimated £54,000 of additional income in benefits.
- Durham County Carers Support had a busy week when their Carers Advice line specially put in place for the week saw 48 callers reach out for advice and support with benefit issues. As a result nine PIP applications have the potential to be awarded and seven referrals made for support with appeals could result in overturned decisions.



(Councillor Jane Brown joins Welfare Rights at Friday's Foodbank session in Chester Le Street)



(The team at Citizens Advice in Spennymoor show their support)

From the feedback received **1732** people were given advice and more than **£100,000** could potentially be secured for clients.

586 of these clients were helped by Citizens Advice County Durham across their 10 branches with Chester Le Street drop-in in particular assisting 43 people with welfare, debt, employment and energy advice.

Young people's housing advisor SHAID helped 39 people across three days. Their budgeting, energy and housing advice will help their clients sustain tenancies and maintain a manageable budget.



(The network comes together for February's training session on Universal Credit)

Nine clients were supported by Durham Money Advice Centre across three days with both debt and welfare advice. Their work could result in increased income through benefits and reduced outgoings to creditors.

24 people attended East Durham Trust's 'Energy Best Deal' for support in maximising their energy efficiency; employability support was also on offer with 58 job seekers attending their job fair in Shotton. Cestria Community Housing also focused on employability support with two workshops and several one to one appointments running during the week on top of their debt, welfare and financial inclusion advice on offer to tenants.

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction advice was provided to 687 people across the Council's Customer Access Points which has huge potential of additional income for the community.

Although Advice Week helped raise the profile of the advice and support available in County Durham, next year we want the week to be bigger and better! To make sure we coordinate the week your clients need Advice in County Durham is setting up a work group dedicated to future advice events...

If you are interested in getting involved, have some feedback or ideas for future events then contact Rachel O'Donnell on rachel.o'donnell@durham.gov.uk or **03000 266038** for more information. We'd love to hear from you.



(Citizens Advice County Durham get involved in Advice Week with energy advice on offer at their Consett branch)

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