

Minister Opens NVQ Assessment Centre

Genevieve Murphy, NIACAB Training Officer

In September Dr Sean Farren, Minister of Higher and Further Education, Training & Employment launched NIACAB's National Vocational Qualification Assessment Centre. Staff and volunteers will now be trained to NVQ standard. Training will be available to any external organisations seeking NVQ assessment in advice provision.

The NVQ Assessment Centre is part of the organisation's overall strategy to link work based learning activities to accredited qualifications. This will complement existing training programmes accredited by the Northern Ireland Open College Network and the University of Ulster (BA/BSc Combined Studies Degree).

Volunteers who are crucial to the work of CAB will particularly welcome NVQ assessment, since it will help them to develop their transferable skills for future employment and career progression.

NIACAB training is not limited to internal training provision and we welcome enquiries from external organisations. If

you require any information on NIACAB's services please contact Genevieve Murphy at Regional Office on 028-90231120 or email murphyg@niacab.org

Pictured at the launch of the NVQ Assessment Centre Status are (left to right): Back Row: Derek Alcorn, NIACAB Chief Executive, John Hunter, NIACAB Chairperson, Dr Sean Farren, Minister of Higher & Further Education, Training and Employment. Front: Genevieve Murphy, NIACAB Training Officer



Staff News

Angela Welch, Coleraine CAB

NIACAB welcomes Cathy Dornan as the new Director of the Belfast Group. Cathy was previously the Director of the Lower North Belfast Community Council. Other



Cathy Dornan
Director Belfast
Group



John Caldwell
Shankill CAB

changes in the Group include: John Caldwell's appointment as the Acting Manager in Shankill CAB until January 2001; Kellie Byrne's appointment as the new **Peripatetic**

Senior Advisor for the group and Claire Devlin's appointment as the new outreach worker for Falls CAB.



Kellie Byrne

Downpatrick CAB welcomes Farina Thompson and Eve Lewis who have been appointed as the Advice Supervisor and the Disability Project Development Officer respectively.

Antrim CAB has a new Outreach Worker, Breda Doherty, and Newry CAB has a new volunteer starting on Work Track as an advice worker. Coleraine CAB would like to congratulate John Campfield and Mathilda Taulbutt on their recent marriage.

Fermanagh CAB has appointed a Rural Outreach Specialist Adviser and volunteer adviser, Ann Breslin and Ian Morris.



Anne Coleman
Regional Office

NIACAB Regional Office welcomes Anne Coleman as Personal Assistant to the Chief Executive and also **Dymphna** McKeown as secretary to the **Development**



Dymphna McKeown
Regional Office

Unit. We also congratulate Lisa King on her appointment to the Equality Commission.

In this issue:

Cross Border Debt	3
Appointment to Standards Committee	4
First Minister Views CAB Information	5
Volunteer Extraordinaire	6
CAB Legal Placements	7

Advice is a quarterly publication of the Northern Ireland Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, 11 Upper Crescent, Belfast, BT7 1NT. (028) 9023 1120

For further copies or to contribute to the next issue contact:

Editor:

John Napier
Director of Information Services
e-mail: napij@niacab.org

Sub-Editor:

Siobhan McKenna,
Information and Policy Officer
e-mail: mckennas@niacab.org

Editorial Panel:

Valerie Adams,
Manager Antrim CAB

Liz Dugdale,
Manager, Suffolk and Andersonstown CAB

Dave Murphy,
Director of Development
e-mail: murphyd@niacab.org

Barry McVeigh,
Specialist Support Officer (Advocacy)
e-mail: mcveighb@niacab.org

Angela Welch,
Manager, Coleraine CAB

Views and opinions expressed in Advice are those of the editor or particular contributors and should not be considered to be the view of NIACAB.

CROSS BORDER DEBT CONFERENCE

Tony Adams, NIACAB Community Support Worker

CAB money advisers met in Bundoran, County Donegal, to address debt issues facing clients North and South of the Border. The conference organised by the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS), was a two day event covering a range of issues such as: Credit Unions and Money

Advice in the Republic of Ireland; Cross Border Debt Collection Practices; Portable Entitlements, The Consumer Credit Act; Legal Systems and Computer Package Demonstrations (North and South).

The two day networking conference gave workers from both

sides of the border the opportunity to gain knowledge of the working environment in each jurisdiction, examine best practice and develop links to enhance future work.

A major advance in money advice provision in the Republic of Ireland is that MABS is soon to become a statutory agency. In addition, MABS has developed a relationship with individual Credit Unions, which through 'Special Budget Accounts' improves the money advice provision to its clients.

Many advisers from Northern Ireland went home with much food for thought and many useful contacts. It was evident from the end of the event that both systems can learn from each other.



Pictured at the MABS Conference in Bundoran are left to right:

Gareth Neill, Grant Thornton, Carol Andrews, Bangor CAB, Kathleen Maguire, Trasna, Briege O'Millan, Ballymena CAB, Adrienne Collins, Conhairle, Lorraine Adamson, Glengormley CAB, Norah Forbes, Strabane CAB, Hazel Mackin, Belfast Group, Anne Shine, Fer managh CAB and Leonard Bartlett, Ards CAB.

INLAND REVENUE SECONDMENT

Paul McGreevy, Inland Revenue secondment.



The introduction of Working Families Tax Credit and Disabled Persons Tax Credit

brought the **Inland Revenue** into closer contact with advice agencies, and the change has resulted in the secondment of Paul McGreevy from the Inland Revenue to NIACAB via the Advice Services Alliance. Paul will be compiling

a report for the Inland Revenue on the organisation and structure of NIACAB, service delivery issues in respect of WFTC/DPTC, and on wider issues such as the role of the advice sector in complementing Inland Revenue business objectives.

In addition Paul may offer consultancy advice, practical help in terms of training and will be reviewing the tax items on NIACAB's information system.

MISALLOCATION OF INCOME SUPPORT RISES TO £57 MILLION

Siobhan McKenna, NIACAB Information & Policy Officer

The Public Accounts Committee met recently to debate the NI Audit Office report on the administration of Income Support. The purpose of the session was to take evidence from the Chief Executive of the Social Security Agency, Mr Chris Thompson. In updating the Committee Mr Thompson indicated that the estimated error in the allocation of Income Support had risen from £42 million in February to £57 million.

The Chief Executive was asked about service delivery failure

and the decanting of SSA business onto CAB. In response to this Mr Thompson said that the Agency had taken steps to ensure that the Agency provided information and advice to customers and that these were detailed in its Customer Charter.

When asked to comment on the appropriateness of working with advice agencies to provide a better service, Mr Thompson stated that the Agency currently has a close working relationship with various advice agencies at local level. He said that the whole

approach is to co-operate closely so that the best service goes to all the citizens of Northern Ireland. When questioned on the issue of funding for advice agencies she stated that the level of funding was not his responsibility but agreed that having a reasonably funded voluntary advice sector is vital.

The Chair of the Committee concluded by stating that he would be following up Mr Thompson's commitments closely and expected improvements in many areas at the next meeting.

Appointment to the NI Joint Standards Committee

Barry McVeigh, Specialist Support Officer with NIACAB has been appointed as a member of the NI Joint Standards Committee for the Social Security Agency and Child Support Agency. The main roles of the Standards Committee are to:

- Provide assurances that Agency Reports reflect the standard of decision making;
- Ensure that feedback mechanisms are in place;
- Provide assurances that the monitoring process is robust and credible.

The Committee comprises of senior staff from both Agencies and three independent members - Les Allamby, Director of Law Centre (NI), Barry McVeigh, Specialist Support Officer, NIACAB and Professor Eileen Evason, UUJ.



Barry McVeigh, NIACAB Specialist Support Officer

LANDMARK PAYMENT : SSA PAYS BANGOR CAB

Bangor CAB was delighted to receive payment from the SSA in August for dealing with an Attendance Allowance referral made to CAB by local SSO staff. This follows the Agency's acknowledgement that helping the public to complete its forms is part of its core business. The payment of the CAB invoice sets a welcome precedent for voluntary advice agencies and establishes an important principle.

NIACAB WELCOMES PRO BONO SCHEME

NIACAB welcomes the establishment of the NI Lawyers Pro Bono Scheme, which will provide free advice and representation in deserving cases, not currently eligible for legal aid. Each solicitor and barrister who takes part in the scheme will offer their services free of charge for three days or 20 hours each year. Further details can be obtained from The NI Pro Bono Unit, PO Box 414, Royal Courts of Justice, Chichester Street, Belfast. BT1 3JP

FIRST MINISTER VIEWS NIACAB'S INFORMATION

David Trimble and his wife Daphne, formerly a volunteer with CAB, recently took the opportunity to discuss NIACAB's electronic Information System with Derek Alcorn, Chief Executive NIACAB.

CAB OFFERS JUDICIAL REVIEW

NIACAB has now formalised procedures with its solicitors Elliott Dufy Garrett, to ensure bureaux can access legal advice when challenging decisions by way of judicial review.



Derek Alcorn, NIACAB Chief Executive, David Trimble, First Minister and Daphne Trimble, viewing the NIACAB Electronic Information System.

Bureaux are contacting Barry McVeigh, Specialist Support Officer at Regional Office, with details of cases which are forwarded to Elliott Dufy Garrett.

In a recent case from Suffolk & Andersonstown CAB, the SSA claimed not to have received the original appeal letter sent by bureau. When a file copy was later sent to them the appeal was treated as a late appeal. After advice from NIACAB's solicitor, judicial review proceedings were threatened. The late appeal was quickly accepted and the clients' access to justice was secured.

DOWN DISTRICT VOLUNTEER 'EXTRAORDINAIRE'

Jacque Richardson, Manager Down District CAB

Jill Sampson, who is currently serving as a member of the management committee, was awarded the NACAB Management Committee Volunteer of the Year Award at the NACAB Annual Conference in York.

Jill has been involved with Down District CAB since its inception 25 years ago. During this time Jill was the original Bureau Organiser and since then has also been involved in representing local interest at NIACAB as a member of the NIACAB Board

where she is currently Vice-Chair Jill has also been the NIACAB representative on the NACAB Council and within Down District CAB she is active in a number of sub-committees, organising and over-seeing bureau work.

Very modest in her moment of glory, Jill is, as always, quick to point out that she is a member of a team and that the bureau did not prosper on the work of a single individual.

Unfortunately, Jill intends to retire from CAB at the end of this year and so it seems opportune that she has received this award now. We congratulate her on this well deserved achievement, wish her well in her retirement and extend our thanks for all she has contributed.



Jill Sampson, Down District CAB receiving her award for Management Committee Volunteer of the year from NACAB Chair, Sir Graham Hart

Raising Advocacy Standards Across Northern Ireland

NIACAB has produced a resources database for tribunal representatives. This database contains Northern Ireland Commissioner's decisions including summaries, Social Security and Child Support Legislation and the Decision-Makers guide. The database has been provided by the Decision-Making & Appeals Unit of the Social Security Agency and DSD Policy and Legislation Branch, and is available in every CAB office across Northern Ireland.

If you are interested in receiving this service, please contact Barry McVeigh, NIACAB Specialist Support Officer on 9023 1120 or Email: mcveighb@niacab.org.

SSA Customer Charter

The SSA Customer Charter launched in October contains a welcome commitment from the Agency to help the public complete its claim forms - an aspect of service delivery failure, which CAB has raised continuously over the past two years. The Charter was launched by the Minister for Social Development, Maurice Morrow, MLA, and Chris Thompson, Chief Executive, SSA.

Cross Border Training

Linda Wilson, Information and Development Worker with Dungannon & District CAB has just completed the new Information Providers course run by Monaghan Citizens Information Centre. This is the Southern equivalent to NIACAB's Adviser Training Programme and Linda is now dealing with cross border queries presented to outreach centres, particularly in the Clogher valley.



Linda Wilson,
Dungannon & District CAB

Trasna, NIACAB's cross border advice project facilitated this development, and Dungannon and District CAB is now in a stronger strategic position with regard to advice delivery on cross border issues.

Trasna employs a specialist adviser in cross border issues, Kathleen Maguire. Kathleen can be contacted at: Telephone 00353 47 72747, Fax 00353 47 77964.

CAB Provides Placements For Trainee Barristers

CAB provides the barristers of tomorrow with the opportunity to increase their substantive knowledge in a work-based environment, giving trainees a more realistic view of the practical implementation of law. It also provides the Institute of Professional Legal Studies with an insight into trainees' abilities and skills. The Council of Legal Education, which governs the Institute, approves the scheme, which is highly valued by both the Institute and the CAB.



Attending a party for the Belfast Group placement students are left to right: Back Row: Pat Coulton, Central Belfast CAB, Sandra Doherty, Falls CAB, David Gibson, Central Belfast CAB, Paul Bready, East Belfast CAB and John Caldwell, Shankill CAB. Front Row (placement students): Helen McGinley, Central Belfast CAB, Roisin Hendron, Falls CAB, Gareth Donaghy, East Belfast CAB and Graham Watt, Shankill CAB.

ELECTRONIC COPY OF 'ADVICE' NEWSLETTER BY E-MAIL



Readers can now register to receive their copy of NIACAB's Advice magazine by e-mail. This new service is available via NIACAB's website.

- ANTRIM** The Bureau hopes to be re-located at its new premises in November
- COLERAINE** The Bureau is also re-locating. Coleraine Borough Council awarded the bureau an extra £6,000 towards increased rent. The bureau also raised £1,000 from TBF Thompson (Garvagh) Ltd., £100 from Rotary and £50 from a local business, to help with increased costs.
- DOWN** The District Bureau received a grant of £5,000 from Lloyds TSB for the development of a Money Advice project.
- FERMANAGH** Rural Outreach Centres have been set up in the towns of Lisnaskea and Irvinestown and in the border villages of Roslea and Belleek.
- HOLYWOOD** The Bureau has moved to the leisure centre, which has full disabled access.
- PORTADOWN** The Bureau has received a second round of funding of £45,000 from N.L.C.B. This is for a 2 year Money Advice Project. They are also recipients of a £5,000 grant from Lloyds TSB for telephone advice.

John Napier, NIACAB's Director of Information Services met with Noel Brady, Commercial Sales Director of SX3 to formalise new working relationships between the two organisations, which involve the continued development of NIACAB's electronic information systems.

Over the next few months NIACAB and SX3 will redesign a number of NIACAB's core databases including the case recording system. This work is focused upon making NIACAB's services more easily available via the world wide web and marks a further development in NIACAB's IT strategy as the Association gears up to meet the Modernising Government agenda.



Pictured at SX3 Headquarters from left to right: John Napier, Director of Information Services and Noel Brady, Commercial Sales Director of SX3

CAB Opens Up Training Programme

NIACAB offers training in welfare benefits, consumer, housing and employment legislation. This training is aimed at those who work in the advice field - to provide participants with the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for the effective delivery of an advice service. In addition, NIACAB offers a comprehensive specialist training programme.

In addition to the courses outlined, NIACAB can provide a tutored training course tailor made to suit any organisation's needs.

Booking forms are available by contacting Genevieve Murphy on 028 9023 1120. E-mail murphyg@niacab.org

