

Working In Partnership With The Equality Commission

Citizens Advice and the Equality Commission have joined forces and developed a working partnership designed to provide a network of qualified advisers who can identify possible causes of discrimination. In addition, the partnership will allow advisers within bureaux to access a formal and direct referrals process to make free legal advice from the Commission available to individual clients.

The partnership has been built upon the foundation of accredited training in equality and discrimination which has been made available to a network of qualified advisers across Northern Ireland. The training course itself was designed by Una Wilson of the Equality Commission and then accredited by Citizens Advice as an Open College Network Level 4 qualification.

At an awards event held during early April twenty people were presented with their certificates who then heard Evelyn Collins, CBE, Chief Executive of the Equality Commission, say "The Commission is proud and delighted to be part of this new initiative which we hope will further extend the reach of our services and help us to deliver effectively for all those individuals who may have suffered discrimination.

I would congratulate all of those who have worked so hard to achieve this new qualification and I cannot underestimate the role of the CAB in this work – they have worked with us to develop and deliver the training and are now a key part of this advisory network. I would like to pay tribute to the important work that they do and to all of their advisers.

By working in partnership we hope we can provide more avenues to deliver equality advice on the frontline to the people who need it."

As well as staff from Citizens Advice Bureaux attending

this groundbreaking course delegates from the Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health (NIAMH) and the Chinese Welfare Association (CWA) also took part. These trained staff will now be able to help individuals determine whether there is a discrimination element to their problem and then outline the legal processes that are involved in taking a case. The network will also be able to directly refer individuals to the Commission's legal team which can provide free specialist legal advice to people with concerns.

Derek Alcorn, the Chief Executive of Citizens Advice, also spoke at the event and said, "CAB advisers right across Northern Ireland have benefited from this training. It will enable our advisers to identify cases of discrimination and, where appropriate, direct our clients to the Equality Commission. Many people contacting us are not aware of their rights in relation to equality issues. This training will enhance our ability to provide this information and to recommend procedures for addressing instances of discrimination."

A number of CAB offices were involved in this innovative and accredited approach and included advisers from Strabane, L'Derry, Lurgan, Portadown, Dungannon, Holywood, Newtownards, West Belfast, Ballymena and Antrim bureaux.

Photo caption: Evelyn Collins, Chief Executive Equality Commission, Louisa McKee, Derek Alcorn and Alayne Kinver of Citizens Advice and Sean McCormack, OCN NI



Advice

Spring/Summer 2011 Quarterly Newsletter from Citizens Advice, Northern Ireland



Staff News

Marianne Hill



Carrickfergus CAB would like to welcome volunteer advisers Jennifer Austin, Heather Peacocke and Marianne Hill

Congratulations to Michele Campbell who has been appointed Manager of Larne CAB

Down district CAB welcomes Celia Lynn Hawkins and Michaela Mc Mahon who have commenced their ATP.

Lisburn CAB would like to extend a warm welcome to volunteer advisers George Walker, Brian Turner, Anne Hayward, Hazel Brown and Helen James.

Strabane CAB welcomes James Parkinson who is currently working on the launch of their extended website and has been accepted for the Advisor Training Programme.

Celia Lynn Hawkins



Michaela Mc Mahon



Michele Campbell



Causeway CAB, Coleraine

Bureaux News

Causeway received a visit from Minister for Social Development Alex Attwood (see page 7) and Gregory Campbell MLA

Lisburn Bureau has won the Mayor's Award for Supporting Volunteering in the large group category on 21st April. The award ceremony took place at Lisburn Council, Lagan Valley Island and was attended by Mayor of Lisburn Alderman Paul Porter and Social Development Minister Alex Attwood.

Margaret Toner, adviser with Newry CAB who completed her Training as part of the Money Active Programme has just begun delivering some sessions with Women's Aid Staff and clients and to date it is going extremely well and all are getting a lot from it.

The Bureau has just been successful in receiving funding of £6,000 from Lloyds TSB for an Advisor one day a week to support clients from the Ethnic Minorities Community. This will be delivered in conjunction with the Ethnic Support Centre Newry will be providing Interpretation Services free of charge

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Lisburn Citizens Advice Bureau - Outreach Services

<p>Seymour Hill Community Association 7-8 Elm Court, Dunmurry 028 9066 9545 Monday 9.30am - 12.30pm</p>	<p>Dunmurry Community Services 19-21 Upper Dunmurry Lane 028 9030 1029 Monday 2.00pm - 4.00pm</p>	<p>Hillsborough Health Centre Ballyquidloch Street 028 9268 1609 Thursday 9.30am - 12.30pm</p>	<p>Knockmore Dunry Methodist Church next to Superstore Knockmore Road Wednesday 2.00pm - 4.00pm</p>
<p>Sally Gardens Community Centre Belmont Road Dunmurry 028 9043 2770 Wednesday 9.30am - 12.30pm</p>	<p>Longstone Mace Park Community Association 15 Howard Place 028 9264 6414 Thursday 9.30am - 12.30pm From Longstone into Mace Park turn first left short walk No 15 on right</p>	<p>Stewartstown Road Windbrook Medical Practice The Health Centre 212 Stewartstown Road 028 9090 2703 Thursday 2.00pm - 4.00pm Friday 9.30am - 12.30pm & 1.30pm - 3.30pm</p>	<p>Citizens Advice Bureau is a registered charity supported by funding our staff & volunteers provide all services FREE to the community</p> <p>Citizens Advice Bureau Bridge Community Centre 50 Railway Street Lisburn BT28 1XP</p> <p>Charity Number XX4536</p>

Lisburn CAB Outreach Locations

CAB Launches Debt Handbook for Advisers

A Debt Handbook for Advisers in Northern Ireland was launched at a special event hosted at the Long Gallery, Stormont on the 8th February 2011. The handbook has been produced with financial support from the Ulster Bank, and contains a range of essential information for debt advisers, and explains the key steps and issues in debt advice. It also covers dealing with emergencies; establishing liability for debt; income maximisation; prioritising debts; preparing financial statements and negotiating with creditors. There are sections covering the Consumer Credit Act, court action by creditors to recover debts and repossession of property/goods and the enforcement of judgments. Further sections deal with mortgages, secured loans and dealing with arrears as well as rent and rates arrears.

The keynote speaker at the launch, Mr David McNarry, MLA, Deputy Chairperson, Department of Finance and Personnel Committee, said, "I welcome the publication of this new resource for debt and other advisers across N. Ireland, particularly at a time when the economic outlook is still bleak and increasing numbers of people are experiencing financial difficulties and require the assistance of debt advisers in the voluntary advice sector. I would like to congratulate CAB and the Ulster Bank on working in partnership together to provide this new resource which demonstrates the value of the Voluntary and Private sectors working together."

Mr. Derek Alcorn, Chief Executive of Citizens Advice, called on the NI Assembly to bring forward an integrated strategy on debt - "We believe that the Northern Ireland Assembly could now usefully consider an integrated strategy on debt which would begin in the schools, and which would equip the public to deal with financial issues. The finance industry in Northern Ireland has much to contribute to such a strategy, and should follow the example of the Ulster Bank in making available the finance to bring such a strategy to fruition."

Mr. Alcorn said that the amount of mortgage debt on CAB's records had risen from £455k in 2006 to £5million 2010. "Against this background, it is clear to us that a rise in interest rates will precipitate hundreds of people into difficulties with their mortgage."

Mr. Paul Thompson, Regional Manager Personal Banking, Ulster Bank, said, "We recognise our responsibility to play a leading role in helping our customers and the communities we serve, particularly during such challenging economic times. We're delighted that Ulster Bank's financial contribution of £300,000, announced in 2009, continues to support the provision of debt advice across Northern Ireland and is proving to be of significant help in supporting, educating and easing the pressure on hard-pressed consumers. We trust that this revised debt handbook will also prove of practical value to advisers in their day to day work."

On-line Web Chat Increases in Popularity

The aim of the Beat the Recession project is to make more free, independent, impartial and confidential advice and information available to people who have been affected by the recession. There is an expectation from funders and individuals alike that advice services will be delivered in ways that truly meet the needs and expectations of their users and make the best use of all available resources.

The resulting project is the first in Northern Ireland to provide an out of hours debt advice service via an online chat room. The project includes a range of interactive tools that allow users to receive the help they need when they need it. This year the Beat the Recession project team have seen a significant increase in users availing of the online chat facility with many more people now availing of the service.

The web chat is unique because clients can be given professional advice and signposted to other self help material via the chat system. Where individuals require more detailed advice over the telephone or on a face to face basis, this will be arranged for them. However the service is becoming an excellent resource for those who are worried about debt and can receive on the spot advice rather than waiting on an appointment or having to take time off work.

The web chat enables clients to have an internet conversation with an experienced money adviser between 4pm-8pm Monday to Friday and 9am-12pm on a Saturday, and remains completely anonymous.



Rachael Cray, Beat The Recession Project Co-ordinator at work giving on-line advice

Overpayment Tribunal Success

A client from Fermanagh CAB was living with his wife and three children until August 2004 when the couple separated. Two of the three children remained with their mother and the other resided with the client. Relations between the client and his wife remained good. During this time both parties claimed Income support and Housing Benefit. The client and his daughter moved to a number of temporary addresses in Tyrone and three other addresses in Fermanagh where the client and his daughter eventually settled. During this time of unsettlement, the client continued to use his ex wife's address in Enniskillen for important correspondence.

In 2005 the Department believed that the parties were still living together as husband and wife, subsequently investigations were carried out on both parties in relation to Income Support. Overpayments of Income Support were raised for both claimants. As part of these investigations surveillance was used as well as documentary traces, for example, electoral role. After a period of time the Department withdrew proceedings for the client's overpayment for Income Support and no longer pursued the client's overpayment. The client's wife appealed her overpayment of Income support in April 2009 and at the hearing, the Tribunal found the Department had failed to establish grounds for raising an overpayment.

In the interim an overpayment was raised against the client by the Housing Executive for housing benefit in the same period based on the same evidence used for the Income Support case. When the adviser became aware of this, she contacted the Housing Executive asking them to strike out the appeal as there had been a finding by the Tribunal of insufficient grounds in the Income Support case. The Housing Executive took the view that this was a different appeal and that evidence proffered by the client at the Income Support appeal was not in their possession. The adviser forwarded this additional evidence via The Appeal Service. In doing, so she also wrote to the Legally Qualified Member regarding the appeal continuing as the matter had been resolved and requested that The Appeal Service consider striking out the appeal. Subsequent to the Housing Executive receiving the evidence, the adviser was informed that the matter would proceed to hearing.

Meanwhile the client was proceeding with purchasing a property from the Housing Executive, a condition of which is that he had to have been occupying it as his home for five years. This information was forwarded to the Housing Executive however the case still proceeded to appeal. The client's appeal was heard in January 2011 where it was held by the Tribunal that the client's appeal should be allowed and the overpayment of £14,000 has now been written off.

Advocacy Training To SDLP Staff

Following a request from Margaret Ritchie's office, training and advocacy staff within Citizens Advice developed a one day advocacy training course for SDLP members. The training consisted of an introduction to decision-making, appeals and social security advocacy.

The training took place in Parliament Buildings, Stormont and was attended by nine SDLP members from across Northern Ireland. The attendees work in various roles within the SDLP and wished to deepen their knowledge of the social security appeals system.

Following attendance at the training a participant said: "I have to say, I found my appeal this morning a lot easier (and actually enjoyed it!) based on the information from the training. It really was worthwhile and very useful. At the very least, I was a lot more confident in my assertions, and feel I am providing the best case for the appellant."

Louise Kyne, Legal Support Officer for Citizens Advice said: "The demand for representation at appeals is at an all time high. Training in social security advocacy provides real benefits for tribunal representatives and ensures that clients receive high quality advice and representation."

During the year Citizens Advice has been involved in the delivery of specialised training to a number of different organisations including Co-ownership Housing, Cedar Foundation, the Consumer Council, Institute Professional Legal Studies, Integrated Services for Children and Young People, Queens University Social Work Department, Praxis,

and the Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health. Training is available for external organisations across a wide range of subject areas including social security, money advice, interviewing and negotiating and social security advocacy.

Further details of the training available through Citizens Advice is available by contacting Janet Sproule on 028 9023 1120 or via e-mail at sproulej@citizensadvice.co.uk.



SDLP Leader Margaret Ritchie, Louise Kyne, Citizens Advice with SDLP Councillors and constituency workers

Cash Boost and Visit for Causeway CAB

The former Minister for Social Development, Alex Attwood MLA and John Dallat MLA visited Causeway CAB earlier in the year to see first hand and to discuss the demand for advice and the impact the recession is having on the lives of people in Coleraine and the surrounding areas.

Alex Attwood, who has continually championed funding for advice giving, stated: "I am here today to confirm the great work people are doing in the community and advice-giving sector."

The Assembly Member for West Belfast spoke to all the staff within Causeway CAB and discussed the casework being dealt with, including the number of repossessions and high unemployment levels in the area.

John Dallat MLA who also attended the visit recognised the work of CAB and stated: "Today CAB is facing unprecedented pressure to meet the demands of people who through no fault of their own are facing money problems which are a direct result of the dreadful state of the economy."

The bureau has also received an increase in funding of almost £10,000 from Coleraine Borough Council.

In response to this additional grant provision the Manager of Causeway CAB, Angela Welch said: "This additional

funding will help meet the shortfall which still remained after agreement was reached on council funding. It will secure jobs and if we had not received this money we would have faced threats to our current staffing levels. The funding will also enable us to increase our opening hours in our Ballymoney outreach facility".



John Dallat, MLA, Minister for Social Development, Alex Attwood and Angela Welch, Manager of Causeway CAB

Social Security Commissioner Success

A case brought by Londonderry (Derry) Citizens Advice Bureau has resulted in Commissioner's Decision C27/10-11(IB) being published in March this year. The decision sought to resolve a conflict in case law between a Northern Ireland Decision in C30/98(IB) and R(IB)2/07, a Tribunal of Commissioners in Great Britain.

The Social Security Commissioner looked at Descriptor 14 of the Social Security (Incapacity for Work) (General) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 which details "epileptic or similar seizures". The client in this case has diabetes and as a result experiences hypoglycaemic attacks which are periods of altered consciousness. The Appeal Tribunal originally disallowed the appeal because it was their understanding that 'hypoglycaemic attacks' could not come within the remit of Descriptor 14.

In C30/98(IB) The Social Security Commissioner decided that it is the causes of the seizures that are important rather than in R(IB)2/07 where it has been decided that it is the effects of the seizures that are relevant. The Social Security Commissioner in C27/10-11(IB) concluded that C30/98(IB) should no longer be followed and that the principles set out in R(IB)2/07 properly represent the law in Northern Ireland, i.e. hypoglycaemic attacks resulting from diabetes can be considered within the context of Descriptor 14. In general terms it is the effects of the seizures that should be considered rather than the cause.

Although Incapacity Benefit will eventually be phased out, it is still an important decision until the conversion to

Employment Support Allowance is fully complete. It is also worth noting that the above issue does not arise within the context of the ESA Descriptors. This Decision can be found in full at www.dsdni.gov.uk under Northern Ireland Digest of Case-law.

The Social Security Commissioner is a specialised member of the judiciary appointed to hear and determine appeals on points of law from Appeal Tribunals under Social Security legislation. Social Security cases include appeals on a claimant's entitlement to benefits, tax credits and housing benefit. The Commissioner also has jurisdiction to deal with questions arising under the Forfeiture (Northern Ireland) Order 1982.

Their work involves giving interpretations of the law which are binding on the administrative, adjudication and Tribunal Systems at the levels below them, and remedying procedural injustices in those systems. The appointment of Commissioner operates at a level comparable to High Court Judges in that appeals from their decisions are to the Northern Ireland Court of Appeal and thence to the Supreme Court. Cases involving European Union Law may be referred by the Commissioner directly to the European Court of Justice.

The Commissioner is assisted by a Legal Officer who is authorised by the Lord Chancellor to issue directions and interlocutory rulings in individual cases, although all final decisions are given by the Commissioner. (Source: Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunal Service)

Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health (NIAMH)

Established by Lady Margaret Walehurst in 1959 Niamh (the Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health) is the largest community based specialist provider of mental health services in Northern Ireland. Through her experience with her son's mental illness, Lady Wakehurst had direct exposure to the lack of support for people outside formal psychiatric institutions. In response to this Niamh set up the first Beacon House Club on University Street in 1959, the chosen symbol being a beacon - 'shedding its light on the darkness of the mind'. Over the following years, in response to emerging needs, Niamh developed other Beacon Support services in towns throughout Northern Ireland so that, on its 50th anniversary Niamh had fourteen Beacon Day Support Centres with over 1,000 members attending regularly. Supporting people who have had experience of mental illness through the provision of community based day support has been at the core of Niamh's services since its inception.

NIAMH now provides a wide range of therapeutic interventions, research and innovative support mechanisms for people with experience of mental illness through its three elements; Compass, Carecall and Beacon.

Compass - As Niamh's Centre for Mental Health Research and Policy, Compass conducts extensive research of the highest academic calibre into mental health related issues. This has included:

- The Niamh Flourishing Society Report: Aspirations for Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Northern Ireland. (2009)
- The Niamh/Compass Research Report: 'Dealing with Suicide, The Needs of Clergy in Providing Pastoral Support. (2010)
- Needs Assessment of Niamh Mental Health Service Users in Supported Housing and Day Support Services. (2010)

Carecall - Carecall provides a wide range of psychological therapies. In line with Niamh Group values it is committed to ensuring that all people have access to services and support appropriate to their mental health and wellbeing needs.

In response to 'A Strategy for the Development of Psychological Therapy Services in Northern Ireland' (DHSSPS NI) 2010, Carecall has structured the delivery of its services to align with stepped care principles.

It is the preferred supplier of 'Counselling and Mental Wellbeing' services to the Public Sector and much of the Private Sector in Northern Ireland. This support focuses on the wellbeing of organisations and the individual.

Its work with young people also continues to develop, currently supporting 102,000 students in regional F&HE Colleges.

Committed to excellence, it continues to strengthen its expertise and capacity in delivering Trauma Services, CBT and Specialist Interventions in line with NICE guideline treatment protocols. Since 2008 it has secured contracts with statutory services and specialist projects such as Lifeline and Bereaved by Suicide. Carecall covers the lives of 350,000 people.

Beacon - Is the largest part of the Niamh Group, providing a network of support services for people with severe and enduring mental health issues throughout Northern Ireland. This includes structured day support, a range of housing options and independent advocacy.

Beacon provides support services to over 2,000 Beacon Members with severe and enduring mental health problems.

In order to further enhance our services to Beacon Members, Niamh has partnered with the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) for the delivery of a 5 year Lottery funded project across all of Niamh's Beacon Day Support Schemes in Northern Ireland. As well as CAB providing annual training to Beacon Managers, Beacon training has also been provided to CAB Money Advisors in relation to working with people with mental health needs.

A new "Consumer Rights and Managing Finances" course has just been accredited at Level 2 by the Open College Network and CAB will be delivering this programme to members in all 14 Beacon Centres between now and September 2011.

As Chief Executive of the Niamh Group I am delighted with our relationship with CAB. Collaborative working is at the core of our new strategy and our partnership with CAB has been a huge success. It has led us to benefit from the expertise within the CAB as well as allowing us to promote mental health and wellbeing through the CAB network. I very much look forward to developing our relationship further in the future.

NIAMH's Mission: We want to build a flourishing society in which all people have access to services and support appropriate to their mental health and wellbeing needs.

To achieve this we will promote, support and explore flourishing mental wellbeing throughout society. We will be an exceptional organisation marked by excellence, efficiency and innovation.

Peter McBride, Chief Executive NIAMH



The Election Manifesto

In the run up to May's Assembly elections in Northern Ireland Citizens Advice produced and published an "Election Manifesto" for circulation to the main political parties and their chosen candidates.

The document clearly sets out what the organisation thinks the Assembly needs over the next four years in terms of social policy analysis, consultations and other documentary evidence.

The manifesto goes on to highlight what Citizens Advice as an organisation can deliver by way of advice and information to both the people of Northern Ireland as a whole and those who are elected to represent them. The document concludes by setting out in detail what Citizens Advice would like to see the next Assembly address:

- maintain focus on the socially vulnerable
- address issues arising out of fuel poverty
- consider legislation to allow data sharing between Stormont departments
- recognise the role that front line advice agencies play and their need for adequate funding
- support structural reform of the banks and banking system
- develop a cross departmental strategy for dealing with debt
- monitor the impact of social security reforms

Speaking at the launch of the Manifesto, Derek Alcorn, Chief Executive said:

"The Northern Ireland Assembly has worked closely with charities and voluntary organisations, and has used much of our information in its debates and decision making. We hope to continue that positive relationship into the New Assembly, and we are stressing the importance of helping socially vulnerable people in the context of cuts to social security, increased energy costs and the growing concern about fuel poverty.

Citizens Advice's manifesto forms part of a wider election campaign. The charity has produced a number of consultations, briefings and reports already providing evidence from the affects of the recession on people in Northern Ireland. Citizens Advice will continue to monitor and lobby the pressing issues affecting the clients who require advice and representation throughout Northern Ireland."

You can read the Manifesto in full and download a copy from the organisation's main web site www.citizensadvice.co.uk

Raising Our Profile

There has been a lot of media interest in the Citizens Advice service over the last year, along with the work the organisation undertakes, as the reality of the recession has emerged. As a result bureaux have been asked to explain what impact the current economic climate is having on clients. This media focus has allowed Citizens advice to highlight the value of good quality advice and information and given the organisation an opportunity to generate further interest in our activities and what we have to say.

To help promote the role we play in assisting people deal with the problems they face Citizens Advice produced an eight page supplement in conjunction with the Belfast telegraph. The supplement, published earlier in the year, was included in a Friday edition of the paper and provided a valuable insight into the work carried out by the network of member bureaux as well as the Regional Office in Belfast. This effective publicity raised the profile of bureaux for both current and potential service users, stakeholders, funders, volunteers, staff and trustees.

Research has shown that many people know us but few know very much about us unless they have used and benefited from our services. The supplement provided an alternative to the traditional newsletter format or structured information available on the Citizens Advice website and was designed to educate and inform. We placed a particular emphasis on the valuable work carried out by volunteer advisers and the contribution they continue to make. We were also able to provide an update on the latest information technology available to both advisers and

clients which helps make the service increasingly accessible and efficient. Lastly, we were able to show how we work in partnership with other organisations in delivering contracts for the provision of advice and information. These include working with the Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment, The Social Security Agency Benefit, Macmillan Cancer Support and the Royal British Legion/RAF Benevolent Fund..



Raising Our Profile - Pages from the Supplement

CARMA for Queens Student Welfare

As a result of Citizens Advice having to meet the challenges brought about by a changing environment in which clients access bureaux services, the organisation has had to undertake a number of recent developments to its electronic case recording and management system CARMA.

In order to simplify the process of case recording in some areas a cut down version of the product has now been designed. Based upon the existing Lotus Notes environment the new product, CARMALite, is also web based thus making it accessible from any computer with an internet browser. This also removes the need to store personal and confidential information locally on hard disk drives so reducing the risks of potential data loss which have come

starkly under the spotlight in recent years.

As a result of these very obvious benefits Citizens Advice has been promoting the use of this case recording and reporting capability among non CAB agencies and already has a number of signed up subscribers.

First to use this user friendly environment has been the Queens University, Students Union Advice Service based within the Student's Union building in Belfast. CARMALite is now used by the service's three full time advisers and replaces a previous case recording system that had proved to difficult to use and not effective in managing the type of case load experienced by student welfare body.

Thanks and Recognition to Volunteers



During a time of continued economic uncertainty and cuts to public services, the value placed on volunteering is higher than ever. During National Volunteers Week (1-7 June 2011) CAB called on people from all backgrounds with different skills to get in touch with a view to helping their local bureau or Regional Office in Belfast.

The Citizens Advice service relies heavily on the generous contribution of volunteers who make up 50 per cent of the total workforce, and this year the organisation needs even more volunteers than ever as the last year has seen a significant increase in demand for advice and information services.

Volunteers can fill a variety of roles: to train as advisers, to campaign on social policy issues, to work as receptionists, help with technology or to sit on the management committee of a bureau.

Opportunities are flexible, depending on the amount of time people want to commit.- some volunteers help out for a short period while others have supported Citizens Advice for many years. In 2009/10 a strong core of 10 per cent of Citizens Advice volunteers had dedicated between ten and twenty years of service.

As part of Volunteer week a 'Thank You' event took place in Belfast City Hall on Friday 3rd June which included a graduation for participants of both the Advisor Training Programme and the Social Security Advocacy Programme. There was also an inaugural presentation for service to our longer serving volunteers in recognition of their contribution to the organisation.

A Volunteer Forum also meets regularly at Regional office which has been set up by volunteers, is led by volunteers and gives a voice to volunteers. One of the most significant achievements of the volunteer forum was the valuable participation and input into the Volunteer Handbook which was funded by the Community Volunteering Scheme launched last year. To find out more about volunteering visit <http://www.citizensadvice.co.uk/en/Volunteer/>.

**A Large print version
of this publication is
available on request
028 9023 1120**

Advice is a quarterly publication of Citizens Advice Northern Ireland, 46 Donegall Pass, Belfast, BT7 1BS

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