

Agenda Item 12b – Derbyshire Unemployed Workers Centre

The DUWC aim to prevent or relieve poverty amongst the unemployed, underemployed, unwaged and those in receipt of or entitled to, benefits credits and allowances as well as supporting other disadvantaged people. After the disruption of the pandemic DUWC has bounced back and brought in £4,132,975 through advice and advocacy. This money goes straight back into the local economy by way of boosting local business, creating jobs, saving jobs, and spending the resultant wages/benefits in our shops and services. In addition, improving the quality of our parishioners lives and those of their families and carers.

DUWC offer free, independent, and confidential advice on all aspects of benefit and credit entitlements. They can carry out benefit checks, help to fill in claim forms and help challenge decisions made by the Department for Work and Pensions right through to Social Security Appeals Tribunal if necessary.

A campaign over the winter months to raise awareness of Attendance Allowance - which is not means tested, has resulted in a big increase in claims for AA. This is an allowance that, again will go a long way to support those most vulnerable at this time.

Until a few years ago we had a DUWC welfare rights advice drop-in session at our business centre here in Eckington. Since this closed our parishioners must, and do, travel to Staveley, Clowne, Brimington or other drop in sessions. Finding the transport if one has no access to a car or funds for taxis is an additional block to accessing support. Buses are now so few and far between as well.

Happily, thanks to a new funding source from Henry Smith Charity and grant funding from the Parish Councils, The Lottery Community fund, The EU Social Fund, Bolsover DC and Chesterfield Borough Council three outreach/drop ins have been able to resume their much-needed work within the Parishes of North Wingfield, Clay Cross and Grassmoor.

It is already becoming obvious that the residents local to these reopened centres have missed them, and that there are increasing numbers of people seeking the advice and support of the skilled welfare rights advisors on hand.

DUWC have also secured a grant of almost 40k to enable former mineworkers and their families across Derbyshire to maximise their incomes during this cost-of-living crisis. Eckington Parish has no shortage of former mineworkers.

Matt Hunt. Assistant co-ordinator at DUWC is visiting our next FCM on 7 February 2023 to explain to us just why Eckington, Marsh Lane, Troway and Ridgeway could benefit from the re-opening of our Drop in Centre at the Business centre, or at another venue suited at this time.

My enquiries around the village have been met with positive feedback. I do think that a good welfare advice service that would maximise parishioners income, their investment in local amenities, shops and transport and that would give them more independence can only be a good venture at this moment in time.

Cllr Kathy Clegg