

WHO ARE WE?

The North East Lincolnshire Community Advice Network, also known as the CAN or NELCAN is a joint project lead by the Grimsby CAB in partnership with Harbour Place and Community Advice Services. The Community Advice Network is managed by Duncan Rossiter. It has three Community Mentors Fiona Easter, Michelle Blastland and Sarah Davidson. We also have an admin team and finance officer.

WHERE WE ARE BASED?

The CAN hub is currently at the Grimsby, Cleethorpes and District CAB, as well as various outreaches throughout the community.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT? (OUR MISSION AND AIMS)

OUR MISSION

The CAN will work on behalf of its service users to improve the provision of advice and support within the community of North East Lincolnshire.

THE DETAIL

This will be achieved through network and partnership development, signposting and referral services, multi-agency training, client mentoring, lobbying, strategic and developmental work.

The CAN will develop a network of advice, training and information provision, monitor and report on referrals and service availability, while identifying gaps in service provision.

We will develop a simpler yet more holistic approach to solving the often interconnected and complex problems clients present with. By retaining the member organisations focus on their particular area of expertise and simultaneously allowing access to those providing help outside of that remit. Communication and information tools will be created to improve clients' transit through the NEL Borough.

The outcome of this approach should be reduced pressure on services as clients present with problems the agencies are experts in solving. This will allow expertise to be focussed where it is needed and not wasted on attempting to deal with problem outside agencies area of focus.

Simultaneously the CAN will develop a similar network of service provision, advice and signposting online. Through the use of innovative internet based solutions, online networking, signposting and information, accessibility of local information and advice available online to both individuals and organisations will be increased.

THE PROJECT HAS SEVERAL AIMS:

- To link together the many and varied services already available to those who need help in the North East Lincolnshire area, increasing accessibility for service users.
- To guide and support individuals in need of help to locate the appropriate information, service or advice.

- To develop online tools, networks and services which reflect and enhance service provision in the North East Lincolnshire area.
- To identify and fill gaps in service provision. Ensuring equitable distribution of limited resources across North East Lincolnshire area to the individuals who need it the most.
- To limit where possible the exclusion of groups or individuals who require support and/or guidance in accessing the help they need.
- To provide training and presentations to groups, organisations and individuals to improve the lives of service users.

WHY DO WE NEED A COMMUNITY ADVICE NETWORK?

North East Lincolnshire is fortunate in that it has several excellent advice and information providers for example, Grimsby CAB, Harbour Place and Community Advice Services (CAS). However accessibility could be greatly improved by means of a unified service linking together all the varied specialist organisations without removing the independence and niche service provision.

This is achieved by developing a network of provision in which each organisation becomes an important part of a greater whole. This greater partnership working means service users need only attend one network member service to access the services of all network members. Essentially the network becomes a one stop shop providing holistic advice and support whatever the problem.

The North East Lincolnshire's existing advice services such as, Citizens Advice Bureau, Community Advice Services, Harbour Place and Others, are operating at near capacity yet a lot of skilled advisor time is taken up answering simple enquiries for information, opening hours and access questions and other signposting and referral queries. The CAN helps these organisations in two ways firstly by assessing clients problems prior to presentation meaning referred clients are coming with their underlying issue pinpointed; Secondly by ensuring that clients attend the correct agency, at the right time, with the right information, to avoid issues with oversubscription where possible. Finally if these agencies cannot provide assistance due to a lack of capacity, the CAN provides a method of offering help to service users and ensuring that they are best placed to help with the clients' enquiry and where possible offering alternatives.

Currently the various agencies and organisations in North East Lincolnshire tend to work either in individually or small working partnerships even when dealing with the same service user.

There are a number of examples of issue which this new approach will seek to improve upon:

- Service users are often unaware of the fact that other organizations exist or what their purpose is. Information from a local partner agency East Marsh Involve confirms that the 180 people who used their information stall were unaware of local advice services.
- Instances have been noted when service users have been passed between a number of organisations none of who were able to deal with the issue, only to be further signposted.
- Occasions have also been noted where clients have fallen through the gaps with each agency believing the other one was dealing with a specific issue when in fact no-one was.
- When attending an agency having been signposted the agency, outreach or drop-in hours have been known to change or be incorrect. Based either on incorrect or out of date sources of information or guess work. This results in client who may have gathered up the courage to attend being let down.

- Even when signposted or referred correctly the number of clients taking up referrals between agencies, even when firm appointments are made is extremely low. This is particularly true for socially excluded groups such as the young and those with mental health problems.
- Local advice providers and other organisations are aware of the limits of their own services and once a client is assessed to be beyond their remit organisations work on a kind of hit and hope basis. Signposting clients to organisations they think may be able to help.
- This does not take into account the difficulties which may exist in accessing services due to over-subscription, staffing issues, unknown opening hours, project specific requirements, services accepting only certain demographics, service provision ending and others.

The CAN seeks to solve these issues by providing an easy to access service by which any network member can, refer to a single point of contact and/or find out which organisations provide the most relevant service, in terms of expertise to help the service user with their problem(s).

The mentors will take a holistic approach to identify the underlying issue and aid them to successfully accessing the most appropriate service. The community mentors will further help those vulnerable service users by supporting them to access the most appropriate service, beyond the front door, even attending appointments with clients.

The CAN service will be accessible instantly by phone, email or in person. And will grow organically constantly remaining in contact with its members to ensure that the information provided is correct and up to date reducing the issues associated with accessibility.

In addition the CAN brings together the local agencies on-line providing a method of finding services and accessing online advice and tools. The profile of all network members is raised through the use of reciprocal linking, digital and non-digital networking. This will enable visitors to any network member to access the services of any other via our online tools and online network. The CAN will help network members to develop their online services through guidance and support, to ensure that their presence online matches their presence in the community.

The CAN will increase early intervention, through a preventative approach involving training and presentations. Informing both service users and local agencies about the CAN's work as well as carrying out workshops, to educate service users increasing their ability to solve their own problems and empowering them to seek the help they might require in the future.

WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF THE CAN?

The Network's long term objective is to bring local agencies, public, private or charitable into one interconnected unit, creating a sea-change in the movement of service users through the North East Lincolnshire area. When a client visiting a CAN member is found to have an issue which that member is unable to help for whatever reason they will be passed immediately to the CAN to enabling quick resolution.

We will also seek to develop and aid in the creation of working partnerships and joint funding bids, increasing efficiency and the success of future funding. This will be assisted by accurate statistics which both provide a map of service provision, highlighting gaps in provision and organisations which are underfunded, as well as indicating the need for closer working between specific organisations which regularly refer to or receive clients from one another.

WHAT SERVICES DO THE CAN TEAM PROVIDE?

Our team of experienced staff will deliver the following services:

TO CLIENTS

The team will provide assessment, signposting, information, referral, support and training. This will be given in person, by email, via social media, via online tools and over the phone.

TO ORGANIZATIONS

The team will provide an efficient method of assessment referral, support for their service users, secure communications tools, up to date information and training, statistics, assistance in joint funding applications. As well as advice and assistance with the development of online services.

FOR THE BENEFIT OF BOTH

We provide outreach sessions for clients via our community mentor team these will help the clients as they do not need to attend our offices and the network member by assisting their service users in accessing help.

WHAT DO YOU NOT DO?

We do not offer financial help, advice or advocacy for clients this is provided by the network members and the services into which clients are referred or signposted.

We do not provide funding to network members.

HOW DO I CONTACT YOU?

If you run an organisation or service and wish to join the network or have any questions about our service contact the CAN Manager full contact details will follow as they are confirmed:

Duncan Rossiter – CAN Manager

Email: duncan@communityadvice.net

To contact us via phone the admin number is 01472 252512 direct contact details will follow in the next couple of weeks.

Mentors contact details to be confirmed in the New Year. They can currently be contacted on 01472 252512 or by email. Michelle, Sarah and Fiona are in role and their email addresses are michelle@communityadvice.net, sarah@communityadvice.net and fiona@communityadvice.net respectively.