

A delegation of Danish visitors responded enthusiastically to a presentation on the Welfare Champions project. Organised by the Area Action Partnership and hosted at Macrea House in Murton the group were addressed by East Durham Trust CEO Malcolm Fallow along with two Champions John Baxter and Rona Hardy.

## Welfare Champions.... in a community near you!



Victoria Collinson	Blackhall Community Centre	Tuesdays 11:30am-9:30pm
Tracey Stanley	Horden Youth and Community Centre	Tuesdays 3pm-5pm
Alison Fahey	Macrea House, Murton	Wednesdays 10am-2pm
John Wood	Donini House, Easington	Wednesdays 10am-12noon
Monica Christie	Eastlea Community Centre	Thursdays 7pm—9pm
Angela Surtees	Easington Social Welfare	Fridays 9am - 10:30am
Jim Currie, Judi Briggs and Claire Bricklebank	Shotton IT Centre	Monday 9 am – 3pm Tuesday 9am - 8pm Wednesday 9am – 5:30 pm Thursday 9am – 5:30 pm (closed for lunch 12pm until 1pm) Friday 9am – 3pm
Alison Bilton	Murton Resource Centre,	Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 10 am—2pm

Some Welfare Champions offer support on a adhoc basis in and around local communities rather than from one specific base. These are as follows:

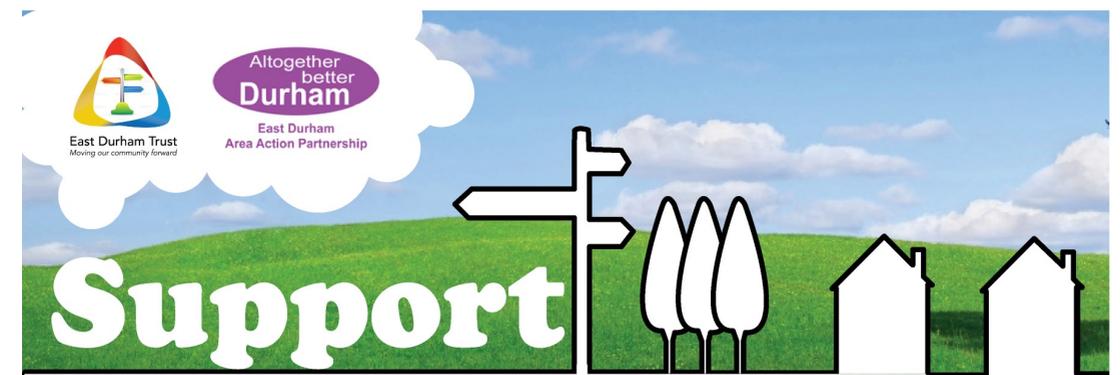
John Baxter and Martin Weight – Seaham Area

Rona Hardy and Denise Brooks - Shotton including Shotton Community Centre

Lisa Hanking and Margaret Girvan - Peterlee



Support



## The newsletter of the East Durham Welfare Champions Project

# Groundbreaking Welfare Champions Project Officially Launches!

A local project aimed at supporting people hit by benefit cuts under the Government's Welfare Reform agenda was officially launched on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> June at Community House, Peterlee by Councillor Brian Stephens

The 'Welfare Champions' project has recruited a small army of local volunteers who will provide advice and guidance to people in their own neighbourhoods. In total, twenty local champions received initial training in potential courses of action for residents who have been affected by issues such as 'Bedroom Tax' and the suspension of Benefits.

As well as providing initial guidance, the volunteers have already signposted individuals to supportive services such as the Citizens Advice Bureau and in some cases actually accompanied them on appointments. The project is run by local Charity East Durham and funded by the local Area Action Partnership and is based on a belief that local people will often turn to people they know rather than the established routes.



**"A significant number of people would rather seek the advice of a friendly, known local face rather than the often complicated and faceless public sector 'helplines' or websites." -**

**Malcolm Fallow CEO,  
East Durham Trust**

# WHO WE ARE HELPING!

## Early Examples of Welfare Champion successes.

### Case Study One:

A early example of success in Shotton provided an illustration of the benefits and flexibility of local people. A gentleman turned up at Shotton IT Centre on a Friday afternoon having had a tentative job offer which would see an end to his benefit crisis. Although the centre was due to close Welfare Champion

Judi Briggs was able to keep it open so that the local man could provide his prospective employer with all of the necessary information. Thankfully the job was secured in a way that would have never been possible through a statutory service.

**Well Done Judi!!**



### Case Study Two:

As an example of how the Welfare Champions can strike at the very heart of the community, John Baxter, a Seaham based Welfare Champion, has assisted people in the unlikely setting of the Seaham Seafront with impromptu conversations leading to positive outcomes for disadvantaged people!!



# WHO WE ARE HELPING!

## What kind of people – in what kind of circumstance are we helping?

At the time of going to press over 200 local people have received the support of Welfare Champions. This has included:

- A Cancer sufferer unsure of their rights and entitlements to benefits and concerned about meeting benefit criteria;
- Bedroom tax enquiries, including families with children who are serving in the army, parents with shared custody arrangements, families with children who are set to 'fly the nest'.
- People affected by changes to benefits
- Individuals looking for support with apply for benefits with concerns about the online system
- Claimants of Employment and Support Allowance seeking help in finding work
- A bereaved widow looking for support in claiming benefits for the first time
- Concerns around changes to Disability Living Allowance
- Client affected by 'scam' email offering interview by contacting premium rate telephone number

**This list is far from exhaustive!!**

Types of support given by Welfare Champions have included:

- Passing on suitable information and literature including 'Weighing up benefits' leaflets
- Allocation of around 50 emergency food parcels from the East Durham Trust FEED project
- Signposted to on line information and support such as the 'Turn2us website
- Referral to support organizations /agencies such as East Durham Homes, Social landlords, Citizens Advice Bureau, Job Centre Plus, East Durham Credit Union, Durham County Council
- Help in accessing internet and computing facilities at local IT centre
- Supporting people in applying for benefits that they didn't know they could claim.
- General information and lots of myth busting!!