

### Falkirk CAB move of premises

CAB Falkirk is based in a property in Vicar Street. We provide an Open Door Service during our extensive opening hours and all of our staff, both paid & unpaid, are working to full capacity. Demand for our services in this ever changing economic climate is steadily increasing but we are severely restricted in our ability to turn round clients in a reasonable time due to there only being three Interview Rooms available to us.

Our average waiting time is 40 mins but often our clients can wait up to two hours to be seen by and adviser due to both the increasing complexity of individual cases coupled with a bottleneck in interview room availability.

As a result we are currently unable to see on average 30 people per week who are in need of our services. In the first quarter of this year alone we have referred 26 clients in need of welfare benefits advice to the “FAWBASU” project.

Moving into next year we know that the demand for our service will only increase as the full impact of the Welfare Reform and changing debt landscape is realised.

To enable us to respond to this there will be an ongoing training programme to build our volunteer base in terms of new recruits and enhanced training for our existing volunteers in order to deliver the more complex specialist services in areas such as money advice, employment law, and benefit representation. Over 90% of our client issues relate in some form to debt, bankruptcy, or welfare benefits. It is imperative that we can re-locate to a premises fit for purpose with sufficient capacity in terms of interview rooms and the facilities to support a rolling training programme for our advisers.

The condition of the current premises is such that a substantial amount of money will need to be spent just to bring them up to good basic standards of safe and healthy working conditions. That, however, will not provide any scope for the capacity of our client provision.

Financially, it will be more cost effective for the bureau to relocate than redesigning and refurbishing our existing premises which have no potential for expansion.

The relocation and refurbishment of premises enables to increase number of interview rooms from 3 to 5/6. It will provide a designated area for client phone and email support and we will have the capacity to increase the number of work stations, enabling us to recruit and support more volunteers. New IT equipment will improve our communication, data capture and reporting and the new phone system will facilitate increasing telephone support. This, combined with regular access to training rooms and IT facilities, will help to facilitate bureau development in line with our business plan.

We are now at full capacity in our current premises and will be working in increasingly cramped conditions with no capacity for growth. We need to take advantage of this opportunity to relocate now to build the capacity for the future and provide an ongoing and expanding professional service responding to the needs of Falkirk residents. We cannot work to increase our client numbers and the complexity of the cases we deal with if we don't have the facilities and physical space to recruit, train and develop our workers.