

FRONTLINE

Law Centre (NI) social welfare law quarterly

WINTER 2011-12

82

SPECIAL FEATURE: ADDRESSING POVERTY

DRAFT PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT

FUEL POVERTY

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TOUGH TEST

Work Capability Assessment



Malcolm Harrington, professor of occupational health at Birmingham University has recently produced his first and second independent review of the

Work Capability Assessment (WCA) for Northern Ireland and Britain respectively.

The WCA is the test that claimants undergo to establish entitlement to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). It is designed to distinguish between those people who can work; those who may be able to work at some point with the right support and those who cannot work.

The WCA is a much tougher test than its predecessor, the personal capability assessment. In effect, the WCA is a test of ability to perform certain activities taking into account physical and mental difficulties. It does not measure employability and therein lies the rub. A person who cannot mount or descend two steps unaided even with the support of a hand rail does not automatically satisfy the test. Neither does someone who has occasional episodes of aggressive or disinhibited behaviour that would be unreasonable in any workplace. The likelihood of a person in the above circumstances finding work whatever support is provided is very remote indeed.

Professor Harrington's first report in Britain in November 2010 was highly critical of the way the WCA was implemented. He found problems with every stage of the process, including a mechanistic and impersonal approach

by ATOS health care who undertook the assessment, poor use of corroborating data and rubber-stamping of medical assessments by decision-makers, with attendant high rates of appeals. His second review reports a noticeable improvement with many of his initial recommendations having been acted on. Nonetheless problems remain. Work has begun on looking at how the test deals with mental, intellectual and cognitive descriptors, fluctuating conditions and exceptions for those receiving certain treatments for cancer. Unfortunately, the Department in Britain has taken a minimalist approach to the recommendations on exempting those receiving chemotherapy and other treatments for cancer and has responded cautiously to potential changes to the mental health descriptors.

The review in Britain entailed extensive consultation with stakeholders, calls for evidence, work with an expert advisory group and the review of independent research. In contrast, the Northern Ireland review has largely been a paper exercise and Professor Harrington has yet to visit Northern Ireland. There is no substitute for being out and about and on the ground. Some interesting differences between Northern Ireland and Britain have not been highlighted. For example, following a successful pilot and the recommendation in the first GB review all claimants in Britain who fail the WCA receive a telephone call explaining the grounds for failure. This has not been introduced in Northern Ireland. The Law Centre has contacted the Harrington review team and a fact finding visit will be launched in the spring.

All of this is important. Between April 2011 and April 2014 up to 76,000 will be migrated from Incapacity Benefit to ESA. To date, around 12,500 claimants on Incapacity Benefit have

'the WCA is a test of ability to perform certain activities taking into account physical and mental difficulties. It does not measure employability'

commenced the WCA. Approximately 6,000 assessments have been completed with 4,400 being allowed. Between half and two thirds of claimants have appealed their decisions. At present, very few migration appeals have reached the tribunal hearing stage. The failure rate of 27 per cent compares relatively favourably with the 30 per cent failure rate in Britain. Moreover, under the new welfare reform bill, entitlement to contributory ESA for people in the work related activity group will be limited to twelve months only (although the House of Lords has voted for this to be extended to 24 months - see Policy Update page 22).

While officials are at pains to distinguish the WCA approach deployed for ESA from the new test for the Personal Independence Payment, it is clear these are significant similarities.

One question that no-one has yet answered effectively is where the level of support and jobs will come from for those moved off Incapacity Benefit and into work activity. Successive governments have argued it was unreasonable and unfair to dump people on to Incapacity Benefit. Instead it appears we are about to dump people on to JSA or off the benefit system altogether. This is equally unreasonable and unfair but, of course, also a lot cheaper.

Les Allamby

Free legal support: new project at Law Centre (NI)



Sinead Mulhern, Head of Legal Support Project at Law Centre (NI), is sending out a call for volunteers to help make the much needed project a success.

Law Centre (NI) has secured funding from Atlantic Philanthropies to set up a new Legal Support Project. This is a free representation unit that will undertake pro bono work concentrating on representation at social security appeals and industrial tribunals in particular. The service proposed will be similar to the Free Representation Unit (FRU) in London. FRU has been operating successfully for over thirty years and has always enjoyed widespread support from both parts of the legal profession. It is widely seen as one of the ways the profession gives something tangible back to local communities. Law Centre (NI) hopes to secure a similar involvement from the legal profession here.

Increase in demand for representation

The initiative has come about because of an increased demand for representation in tribunals which is currently not being met. The programme of migration from Incapacity Benefit to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), which began in February 2011, is generating a surge in demand for advice. This is expected to lead to a significant increase in social security appeals, given that up to 76,000 people claiming these benefits in Northern Ireland will be subject to review under the more stringent Work Capability Assessment (WCA). Based on the Department for Work and Pensions' pilot, it is estimated that approximately

30 percent will fail the test which is around 20,000 claimants. Similarly, in the area of employment, the harsh economic climate which has resulted in high levels of job loss, has also had a significant impact on the demand for legal advice and representation. In the year 2009/10 72 percent of claimants were unrepresented in industrial tribunals. The Law Centre is also aware of widespread concern across the legal profession about the protracted nature of industrial tribunal cases where claimants are unrepresented, with an attendant escalation in costs for represented parties. All of this impacts adversely on effective access to justice.

Referrals

The new service, which will be based at the Law Centre in Belfast, will be launched on 1 March. In common with other Law Centre services, the Legal Support Project will be a referral service. Cases will therefore normally be referred to the project through the Law Centre's existing employment and social security advice lines, or directly by one of our member organizations from across Northern Ireland. A leaflet with further details on the operation of the Legal Support Project will also be published and distributed to our members early in the new year.

Volunteers

The casework in the Legal Support Project will be carried out by volunteers who will provide advice, undertake preparation and negotiation and represent at tribunal hearings. The volunteers will be trained and supported by the Head of the Legal Support

Project, Sinead Mulhern, a qualified solicitor, and our Project Worker, Owen McCloskey.

The initiative has come about because of an increased demand for representation in tribunals which is currently not being met.

The Legal Support Project is now looking for volunteers from a wide variety of legal/advice backgrounds and experience. Obviously, the project will be of particular interest to experienced advisers, law graduates and newly qualified lawyers who want to gain valuable representation experience, and those wishing to refresh their skills after a break from legal practice. We are also looking for experienced legal practitioners to provide some pro bono support to those volunteers. This could involve, for example, providing specialist legal advice or giving training or mentoring support to volunteers.

If you are interested in working with the Legal Support Project, you can get further information on Law Centre (NI)'s website at www.lawcentreni.org or contact Sinead Mulhern, Head of the Legal Support Project, directly at tel: 9024 4401 or sinead.mulhern@lawcentreni.org.

Photos: Sinead Mulhern (top left) and Owen McCloskey (top right). Photos: Kevin Cooper and Catherine Couvert

Tribunal reform: time for change

The Law Centre has published two new reports on tribunal reform: Structural Tribunal Reform in Northern Ireland (by Brian Thompson, School of Law, University of Liverpool) and Supporting Tribunal Users (by Gráinne McKeever, School of Law, University of Ulster).

The reports aim to contribute to plans for tribunal reform which are currently being developed by the Department of Justice for Northern Ireland. The Department of Justice has now issued a discussion document which draws on many of the themes discussed in the research.

Gráinne McKeever presented copies to Siobhan Broderick of the Northern Ireland Court Service at an event held at the Law Centre on 15 December to discuss the Department's proposals.

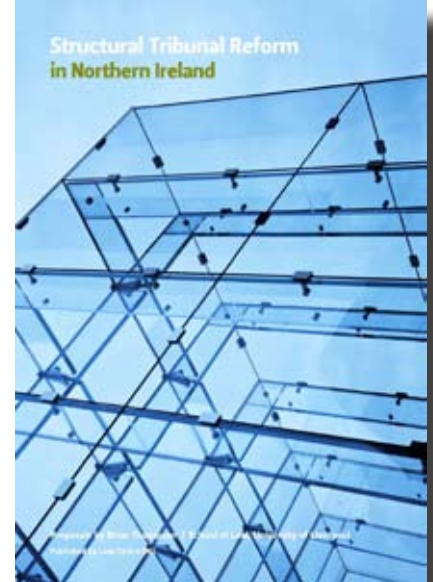
Supporting Tribunal Users – Access to pre-hearing information, advice and support in Northern Ireland identifies

barriers to accessing support services which can make the experience of going to tribunal daunting and limit the chances of successful cases and suggests changes that could improve tribunal users' experience.

Structural Tribunal Reform in Northern Ireland recommends reforms to improve tribunal efficiency and access to justice.

Developed with financial support from the Nuffield Foundation, the reports address research gaps identified in *Redressing Tribunal Users' Disadvantage – Proposals for Tribunal Reform in Northern Ireland*, a research report published last year.

The reports are available on the Law Centre's website (www.lawcentreni.org), or paper copies can be obtained from our Publications Unit by ringing 9024 4401 or email catherine.couvert@lawcentreni.org.



Migrant workers rights guide updated

The Law Centre and Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission have launched the new revised and updated version of their online guide to the rights of migrant workers, with support from the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

Les Allamby, Law Centre (NI) Director, Michael O'Flaherty, Chief Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, and Virginia McVeigh, Director of the Commission, launched the guide on 19 December, to mark International Migrants Day.

The guide helps migrant workers and their families understand their rights, entitlements and responsibilities while in Northern Ireland and ensure that they receive the right advice if they encounter any problems.

Michael O'Flaherty, Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, said: 'Migrant workers have the same human rights as everyone else in Northern Ireland. In times of recession it is particularly important that people know what their rights are. This new online guide will help migrant workers in Northern Ireland to understand the rights and entitlements they have. It will also ensure that if they encounter any problems in accessing



Virginia McVeigh and Les Allamby. Photo: Kevin Cooper

those rights and entitlements, they receive the right advice.'

Les Allamby, Law Centre (NI) Director, said: 'It is vital that migrant workers have access to good quality information about their rights. As research in Northern Ireland recently demonstrated, migrant workers are particularly vulnerable to being exploited at work and find it harder to access advice and support to deal with problems.

The online guides made available in several languages are a demonstrable value of the partnership between the voluntary and statutory sectors with government.'

The English version of the guide is available on the Law Centre's website (www.lawcentreni.org). It is due to be translated into the languages most used by new migrants to Northern Ireland.

Successes and challenges: Law Centre AGM



Photos: Kevin Cooper



At the Law Centre AGM on 9 December, James Browne, senior research economist at the Institute for Fiscal Studies, spoke on the financial impact of welfare reforms on Northern Ireland incomes. He explained how families with children and those on Disability Living Allowance will be particularly affected.

Professor Eileen Evason, Chair of the Social Security Standards Committee, stressed the impact on communities already stricken by the recession and expressed concern that, in the current climate, increased conditionality and stricter work capability assessments are counter-productive. Anne McCleary, Head of Policy and Legislative Division, DSD, recognised the concerns expressed by trade unions and voluntary groups and argued that welfare reform will be applied sensitively.

Les Allamby celebrated the year's achievements, including:

- Lois Hamilton's Marsh Christian award for outstanding achievement in anti-trafficking work;
- employment unit spotting a flaw in the draft employment agency law, leading to an amendment here and in Britain;
- convincing OFMDFM to start a pilot emergency fund for migrant workers and others;
- celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Refugee Convention with the Inclusive Neighbourhood Project;
- work with Mental Health and Learning Disability Alliance towards upcoming draft legislation;
- publications partnerships such as 'Alternatives to Court', with

Queen's and Northern Ireland Ombudsman and 'Forced Labour' research on the treatment of migrant workers in specific industries, with Institute for Conflict Research, An Munia Tober and STEP.

He outlined the challenges ahead, in a context of major cuts in funding and public expenditure, challenging welfare

and judicial reforms and increased demand on advice services.

Sinead Mulhern, Head of the Law Centre's new Legal Support Project, explained plans to develop pro-bono social security and employment work. Jennifer Greenfield, new Assistant Director (Casework and Training), presented certificates to successful candidates of Law Centre accredited courses.

NICVA's smart solutions

At NICVA's AGM on 14 October, Bob Stronge, Chair, reflected on a year which saw the impact of economic downturn, cuts to public expenditure and the reshaping of public services creating many difficulties for families and communities in Northern Ireland.

Recognising the challenges, he reiterated NICVA's focus on helping the sector to engage in debate on our social and economic future and emphasised that a 'Good Society' is not just about the economy but about the role of the voluntary and community sector. He congratulated the organisation for achieving its Mark of Excellence during the year.

Chief Executive Seamus McAleavey focused on the Smart Solutions in Tough Times campaign initiated by NICVA. He talked about the sec-

tor's engagement on the Executive's budget and encouraged members to bring forward ground-breaking solutions that are achievable in a difficult financial climate.

Deputy Chief Executive Úna McKernan reflected on the increasing diversification of funds in support of NICVA's work, including DSD, the Big Lottery Fund, International Fund for Ireland, Peace III, Atlantic Philanthropies and the NI Development Fund.

Seamus McAleavey, Bob Stronge and Úna McKernan. Photo: NICVA



Advice NI: the hidden benefits of advice

Advice NI's AGM on 25 November showcased the hidden benefits of advice and highlighted the difficulties facing many households due to welfare cuts, the recession and the rising cost of living.

Advice NI member organisations dealt with over 260,000 enquiries in the last year, most of which were welfare benefit related, with housing and debt enquiries also to the fore.

Bob Stronge, Chief Executive, highlighted the social security benefit appeal workload as more and more people seek help to challenge benefit decisions, particularly on disability benefits.

He pointed out the many benefits of advice, from income maximisation, negotiating with third parties and representing people at tribunals and hearings. Beyond financial benefits, outcomes for clients include better health, less stress, improvements in family life, and

better employability prospects. He added: 'Advice NI services impact on people's lives in many ways and we will continue to work with all levels of government on grassroots issues affecting households across Northern Ireland.'

The tribunal representation workload of Advice NI member organisations has continued to increase in 2011. Representation was provided at a record high 1,467 hearings, amounting to an increase of 138 or 10 percent as



Advice NI's Kevin Higgins, Fiona Scullion from Mindwise and Jason Nicholson from Stepping Stone. Photo: Nigel Hunter

compared to 2010. This figure represents a phenomenal 57 percent increase when compared to the representation undertaken in 2009.

Citizens Advice responding to recession

Responding to recession was the theme of Citizens Advice Northern Ireland's 20 October AGM.

Chief Executive Derek Alcorn highlighted the Benefit Take Up project, a partnership with the Social Security Agency. The additional benefits recovered for clients through this project, if held for the average length of claim, would be £29.8 million. Derek talked of the valuable service of representing clients at Tribunal Appeals, pointing out that

the volume of clients remaining unrepresented at such appeals was a 'concrete case of unmet legal need'. One third of all those appearing with a representative at tribunals are represented by a CAB adviser. Representation greatly increases chances of success, from 1 in 5 to 1 in 2. He went on to describe the CAB's programme to standardise services, adding: 'Standardisation underpins our quality of service'.

Neil Gibson of Oxford Economics focused on how Northern Ireland's financial

challenges are increasing but the amount of money available to respond to those challenges is getting smaller. He stressed that organisations must be able to show they represent best value for money as public funds need to be seen to be administered fairly and achieve maximum benefit. He pointed out the need for realism about how the Northern Ireland economy is funded and that Northern Ireland's citizens need to take responsibility for managing its financial affairs.

Rachael Cray, coordinator of the Beat the Recession Project, talked about how the service responds to the changing demographic of those seeking advice. Roadshows in shops and public libraries and a successful pilot scheme in Belfast reach many people in need of advice. Negotiations are underway to bring the project to jobcentres throughout Northern Ireland. The out of hours webchat, social networking and email service provide the anonymous, flexible, immediate and dynamic service many clients want. Beat the Recession is an outreach money advice service led by Citizens Advice in partnership with Advice NI and Law Centre (NI).



Macmillan CAB Project Team. Photo: Citizens Advice



The credit crunch of 2008 has moved in to the Euro crisis of 2011, with banks under continuing pressure to recapitalise, and sovereign governments

in Europe under pressure to restrict expenditure and balance their budgets. In consequence, we have a recession, a contracting economy, increasing personal debt and cuts to the income of the poorest people in the UK.

The Welfare State legislation of the 1940s was a major social settlement, which was challenged 30 years later in 1979 by the election of Margaret Thatcher. The era of deregulation which she introduced exploded spectacularly with the US sub prime crisis in 2008, forcing the British government to spend £1.3 trillion alone on shoring up the banks. The crisis was actively caused by governments. The UK financial industry was deregulated in the mid 1980s, easing restrictions on lending and the availability of credit. Gordon Brown took regulatory power away from the Bank of England and gave it to the Financial Services Authority. In 1999, the Clinton Administration passed the Financial Services Modernisation Act, which lifted restrictions on the integration of banking, insurance and stock trading which had been imposed by the Glass Steagall Act of 1933.

Brown made speeches to the city about 'light touch regulation' and Mandelson said publicly that the

*Citizens Advice Chief Executive **Derek Alcorn** analyses the current crisis in the context of decades of deregulation and challenges to the welfare state and argues for the development of new financial and social models.*

THE POOR GET POORER

Recession, deregulation, growing inequalities and the welfare state

government was relaxed about people being seriously rich. Against this background, and a deliberately engineered boom which was a one way bet on house prices continuing to rise, the economy expanded, and people were encouraged to borrow against their houses, their credit cards and against the self certification of their own income. A Commission on Banking has now recommended that retail and investment banking be separated. This would catch us up with where the USA was in 1933.

It is difficult to resist the argument that the country is run by a feral elite who are accountable to no-one and who are rewarded even for failure on this scale.

The Occupy Wall Street protesters and their counterparts across the world, including those in Belfast, are

'It is difficult to resist the argument that the country is run by a feral elite who are accountable to no-one and who are rewarded even for failure on this scale.'

raising fundamental issues about the growing and visible income inequalities in our society, the failure of financial regulators to do their job, the £25 billion uncollected tax in the UK (HMRC 2010 estimate), the expectation that the UK public, including the poorest people, should shoulder the burden of the £1.3 trillion bailout of the banks, which continue to pay out huge sums in bonuses.

We can only look in envy at Norway which has placed the proceeds of its oil industry into a Sovereign Wealth Fund for improving the country's public services and infrastructure, and at Canada which never deregulated its finance industry. The current challenge to the social settlement which is the welfare state is familiar in its rhetoric. It sees expenditure on health, education, housing and public transport as a cost, rather than an investment.

As the EU grapples with the Euro crisis, it is clear that new financial and social models need to be developed which accept the environmental arguments about the unsustainability of unlimited economic growth. The Euro crisis is perhaps a stage in the development of such models.

Occupy Belfast. Photo: Catherine Couvert



Catherine Couvert, Publications Officer at Law Centre (NI), and Kevin Higgins, Head of Policy and Research at Advice NI, look at what's in store in Stormont's draft programme for government and the Chancellor's autumn statement.

TIGHT BUDGETS

Can poverty reduction, investment and cuts go hand in hand?

A digest of the draft programme for government

The draft Northern Ireland Programme for Government 2011-2015 was announced in the Assembly on 17 November. Announcements are defined as much by what they do not say as by what they say, and this Programme for Government is no exception. Although choices are severely limited by Westminster's budgets, the announcement is mainly about what the Executive will invest in, rather than what is being cut.

However, First Minister Peter Robinson sent a clear message that, despite strong opposition as demonstrated by the 30 November strike and marches, public sector cuts remain high on the Executive's agenda. Arms-length bodies and the government estate are to be 'rationalised'; local government reform and the increase of online services are also expected to save funds.

On poverty and social development, the main announcements are:

- a commitment to deliver 8,000 social and affordable homes, and to introduce initiatives aimed at reducing fuel poverty;
- a commitment to address the issue of childcare and increase pre-school education provision to facilitate the welfare reform agenda;
- £80 million Social Investment Fund to address dereliction, promote the physical regeneration of deprived areas, improve pathways to employment for people who are not working and tackle deprivation in communities.
- a commitment to investing in social enterprise to increase community sector sustainability.

In terms of the voluntary advice sector, key points include:

- the plan for an advisory group to assist Ministers in alleviating hardship including any implications of the Welfare Reform Programme;
- the establishment of a new eleven council model for local government by 2015;
- introduction of and support for initiatives aimed at reducing fuel poverty;
- a commitment to improving access to justice.

Other measures to reduce poverty and inequality are proposed, such as:

- invest £2.3 billion in health infrastructure over the next ten years, with a network of primary and community based care centres, and approximately £2.5 billion to be invested in the social infrastructure (although this would need to be assessed against current health service cuts);
- complete a Child Poverty Action Plan and fulfil obligations under the UN Convention for Rights of the Child;
- tackle rural poverty through a £13 million package of funding;
- use the £20 million per annum Social Protection Fund to help those who face hardship due to the economic downturn;
- introduce new health and social care measures to tackle long term conditions which disproportionately impact on people who are deprived;
- extend age discrimination legislation to goods, facilities and services.

'Although choices are severely limited by Westminster's budgets, the announcement is mainly about what the Executive will invest in rather than what is being cut'

The other main facet of the draft programme is investment into business and infrastructure:

- pressing for devolution and reduction of corporation tax;
- supporting manufacturing exports and tourist revenue through measures such as the Creative Industries Innovation Fund, an extension of the Small Business Rate Relief Scheme to 2015 and the elimination of Air Passenger duty on direct long haul flights;
- completing the Derry Coleraine rail improvement and continuing work towards rapid transit in Belfast;
- investing in water services while renewing the commitment to no water charges;
- investing in electricity to improve security of supply and ensure more efficient use of wind energy;
- development projects such as Maze/Long Kesh; the 'One Plan' for the regeneration of Derry and the Lisanelly Shared Education campus in Omagh.

There are plans for sustainable development such as investing in sustainable modes of travel and improving the thermal efficiency of Housing Executive stock. Education plans are a mix of savings and investment. The new Education and Skills Authority is to be operational in 2013.

The consultation document is on www.northernireland.gov.uk/draft-pfg-2011-2015.pdf. Responses should be sent by 22 February 2012 to the Programme for Government Team at OFMDFM email: pfg@ofmdfmi.gov.uk.

Key benefit and tax credit measures in the Chancellor's autumn statement

The Chancellor George Osborne made his autumn statement to the House of Commons on 29 November and, as expected, there is not much good news.

Quoting forecasts from the Office for Budget Responsibility, the Chancellor told MPs that the UK economy was now forecast to grow by 0.9 per cent this year, compared with 1.7 per cent forecast in March and 0.7 per cent next year, down from the 2.5 per cent forecast. He outlined that growth will continue to be hit by rising international commodity prices, the Eurozone crisis and by the discovery that the long term damage to the economy from the financial crisis was worse than previously thought.



Trade Unions rally against public sector cuts - 30 November 2011. Photo: Catherine Couvert

To summarise, the statement outlined that borrowing and unemployment are set to be higher than forecast and spending cuts are set to carry on to 2017. Some key announcements included:

- one per cent cap on public sector pay rises for two years after the end of the current freeze next year;
- most working age and disability

benefits will be uprated by September 2011's Consumer Price Index figure of 5.2 percent but the promised rise of Child Tax Credit child element of £110 above CPI was withdrawn;

- the basic State Pension will rise by £5.30 to £107.35 in April 2012, whilst the full couple rate for those whose

entitlement is based on their spouse's or civil partner's pension will rise by £8.50 to £171.85 per week;

- the standard minimum income guarantee in Pension Credit will increase by 3.9 percent in April 2012, to £142.70 per week for single pensioners and £217.90 a week for pensioner couples;
- the increase in the State Pension age to 67 will be between April 2026 and April 2028, with an expected saving of £60bn in today's prices between 2026/2027 and 2035/2036;
- a mortgage indemnity scheme to help up to 100,000 people buy homes with five percent deposit;
- 50 percent discount for social tenants wanting to buy their own homes in England; and
- the government will, as previously announced by the Deputy Prime Minister, introduce the Youth Contract, worth £940m over the spending review period, to provide support for 18-24 year olds to get into the workplace.

The Chancellor's autumn statement can be viewed at: cdn.hm-treasury.gov.uk/autumn_statement.pdf.

Help for homeowners facing repossession

The Minister of Justice and the Minister for Social Development have welcomed the launch of a video which encourages people threatened with repossession to attend their court hearing and takes them through every step of the process. The short video, produced by Housing Rights Service and funded by the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunal Service, was launched on 18 November. Latest Northern Ireland Court statistics show a 104 percent increase in the number of people facing losing their homes in the last five years.

Janet Hunter, Housing Rights Service Director, commented: 'In the last three months the number of homeowners contacting us for help because they are threatened with repossession has doubled. We know first hand that most people do not attend their court hearings. This video aims to address people's fears and to let them know that attending court is vital and can greatly improve their chances of keeping their home.'

Minister of Justice David Ford MLA commented: 'This short film is vital viewing for those who have not been to court before. It explains the procedures very clearly and advises that a range of options may be open to homeowners. The central message is that it is never too late to get help and that being present at each stage of the process can ensure that home repossession remains a measure of last resort.'

This sentiment was echoed by the Minister for Social Development Nelson McCausland MLA: 'In these difficult economic times it is important that householders can access as much information as possible to help them stay in their homes if their personal circumstances change. This informative video clearly explains what can happen at a mortgage repossession hearing, and also tells householders that having to attend a hearing does not always lead to actual repossession. I welcome this initiative from the Housing Rights Service and the Courts Service, which will help to prepare and better inform householders.'



Minister of Justice David Ford MLA and Janet Hunter. Photo: HRS

The video is available on www.housingrights.org.uk, www.nidirect.gov.uk and www.nihe.gov.uk.

ANTI-POVERTY MEASURES

Stormont initiatives to fight poverty

Derek Alcorn, Nelson McCausland and Alex Maskey comment on NI Executive measures to alleviate fuel poverty and deprivation

The First Minister and Deputy First Minister have announced that more than 250,000 people here will benefit from a one-off Executive funded fuel allowance payment this winter.

Funded under the Social Protection Fund, which was established by the Executive in March 2011 to mitigate against the impact of the harsh economic climate on the most vulnerable in society, the initiative will support older people, cancer sufferers and individuals receiving a number of income-based benefits.

People in receipt of Pension Credit and those receiving cancer treatment will get a one off payment of £100. A payment of £75 will be made to people who receive Income Support, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance or Income-based Jobseekers' Allowance

Payments, totalling £23 million, will be automatically issued to those who are eligible. Payment recipients will be determined by a 'qualifying week' in December 2011 and are expected to be issued in February 2012.

Citizens Advice Chief Executive Derek Alcorn said:

'Citizens Advice welcomes this additional payment as a useful step forward to tackling fuel poverty in our community. Our report into fuel poverty found that older people, families with low incomes and disabled people were particularly hard hit by energy problems. 30 percent of older clients have to make choices between heating and eating. 77 per cent of clients had to ration the amount of heat that they use.

Of course, this is not a solution to the problem of fuel poverty and very much more needs to be done.'

Fuel poverty: focusing on those most in need

Social Development Minister Nelson McCausland sets out his fight against fuel poverty



With 33,000 households in Northern Ireland paying out more than 25 per cent of their income on energy and at a time of rising electricity, gas, oil and coal prices the issue of fuel poverty is a real one for many, many people.

It is a complex issue and the solutions cut across organisational boundaries throughout government and beyond. There are three main factors that contribute to a household being in fuel poverty; income; fuel prices and energy efficiency of a dwelling.

While improvements to the energy efficiency of homes help to reduce the risk of fuel poverty, it is important to acknowledge that low income and high fuel prices are the main contributors.

In April 2010, the Department

for Social Development launched its new fuel poverty strategy 'Warmer Healthier Homes'. The strategy places significant emphasis on the cross-departmental nature of the whole area of poverty.

The Department continues to fund the Warm Homes Scheme and over 80,000 households have been helped with insulation and/or heating measures since 2001. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive also administers an annual Heating Replacement Scheme which improves energy efficiency within the social housing sector.

I was also delighted to see the Executive's Programme for Government commit to installing double-glazing in all Housing Executive properties by 2014/2015. This, along with other measures like our ongoing pilot Boiler Replacement Scheme launched in June this year, should start to make a real difference in people's living rooms.

My Department recently announced its intention to pilot a Pay as You Go option for oil heating systems. This innovative technology could see significant savings for those using emergency drums to heat their home.

Earlier this year, the University of Ulster launched a report entitled 'Defining Fuel Poverty in Northern Ireland: A Preliminary Review'. This useful tool will help to focus Departmental initiatives on those most in need. The Department is now reviewing its approach to how we deliver energy efficiency measures and exactly what measures we should be delivering.

Most recently the Northern Ireland Executive announced its intention to make a one-off cash payment to around 250,000 vulnerable people across Northern Ireland to help with fuel costs this winter. This initiative indicates how the issue of fuel poverty is being tackled in a cross departmental way and will offer assistance to those in need.

These initiatives display my Department's commitment to helping vulnerable householders in most need. I believe that more should be done to help people struggling with high energy costs and I will continue to work with my Executive colleagues to address the issue for people and families most in need.

'more should be done to help people struggling with high energy costs'

Working together to end poverty for good

Alex Maskey MLA is a Member of the Northern Ireland Assembly for the South Belfast Constituency. He is the Chairperson of the Assembly's Committee for Social Development which scrutinises the work of the Department for Social Development. He talks here about how he believes poverty can be alleviated.

Twenty-eight percent of children and 26 per cent of pensioners in the North are living in poverty. These are the stark and depressing findings from recent research carried out by the Department for Social Development.

In my own constituency, I see evidence of poverty on a daily basis, I see the struggle of those, young and older alike, trying to heat their homes, clothe their children and put food on the table. As a public representative committed to improving standards of living, the reality of this situation is difficult to countenance.

I also see that the contributory factors to poverty are multi-faceted and our response to counteract this must be multi-faceted also. Clearly all Executive departments and Committees have a part to play. The Draft Programme for Government (DfG) has set objectives in terms of job creation and there can be little doubt that it is primarily through job creation that poverty can be alleviated in the longer term. Alongside this for example, more children must be enabled to and supported in attaining a higher standard of education; more apprenticeships and vocational training opportunities must be made available, entrepreneurship and social enterprise must also be encouraged and actively promoted.

Clearly, the Assembly Committee for Social Development with all others is gravely concerned about the current economic climate and fully understands the difficulties and challenges in creating jobs in the time ahead. Therefore we earnestly hope and indeed expect that the job creation objectives in the draft PfG will be met with good results. However, in these circumstances it is even more important to maintain an adequate



benefits system in order to support those unable to secure employment or decent wages.

Of great concern to the Committee is the potential impact of the forthcoming Welfare Reform Bill. While a stated central aim may be to simplify the benefits system and help people get off benefits and into work, we fear that a substantial reduction in benefit entitlement, in this era of fewer job opportunities, will exacerbate poverty levels further at least in the shorter term. It is imperative therefore that real and collaborative action is taken to mitigate against the negative impact of 'Welfare Reform' so that a bad situation for those most vulnerable does not get worse. My Committee will be working closely with DSD and other key stakeholders

'The harsh truth is that many families here have known little in their lives but poverty, indeed for many it is a generational issue'

in trying to minimise the impact of this Bill on our most vulnerable and broadly welcomes the Executive's decision, outlined in the draft PfG, to establish an advisory group to assist Ministers in alleviating hardship including any implications arising from the British government's 'Welfare Reform' agenda.

The harsh truth is that many families here have known little in their lives but poverty, indeed for many it is a generational issue. There are certainly no quick or easy fixes, but I strongly believe that a collaborative approach across all Committees and Government departments is the way forward. We must focus on outcomes and not just on processes. We cannot afford to work in isolation or solely on the basis of ideals - instead we must actively strive to put innovative, tangible and realistic solutions in motion. It is our duty as public representatives to do all that we can to ensure that poverty, in all its forms, is put firmly in the past.



Bill of Rights Forum representatives at rally against cuts 30 November 2011. Photo: Catherine Couvert

Peter Hutchinson, Centre for Economic Empowerment, NICVA, sees growing a well-regulated private sector as the way forward for Northern Ireland's economy.

THE QUEST FOR SOMETHING NEW

Growing the private sector to strengthen our economy

The first step to building a fairer economy in Northern Ireland is for more people to get involved in a more informed and extensive debate. NICVA, through its Centre for Economic Empowerment (CEE), wants to play a leading role in that debate and its first economic conference held on 8 November 2011 started this process.

Unfair and unstable

To set a goal of building a good or fair economy we are concluding that the economy we currently have is not. Is this the correct conclusion to make? The answer is clearly yes, and not only is the economy we have not a fair one, it is profoundly unstable, as events have shown; and reciprocally the foundations of its instability are linked to its unfairness.

Will Hutton in his recent address to NICVA's first economic conference stated that he holds two propositions to be true:

'After the 20th Century and Deng Xiaoping's refutation of communism and state socialism in February 1992, nobody can argue that socialisation of the means of production is a way forward as a model for organising economy and society. But after the events of autumn 2008, and to some extent the on-going crisis in the Eurozone, nobody can argue that actually an unfettered, unalloyed free market is also an optimal way of organising capitalism, and the quest is on for a way of organising our affairs better in the first half of the 21st Century.'

In Northern Ireland we need to participate in the quest for something new. The ongoing debate between the Coalition Government and the Labour Party

is based on whether we should continue with austerity measures to get us onto a more stable long-term economic footing, or whether we should increase public spending (through increased borrowing) in order to boost immediate economic growth – both parties claim that their approach will reduce the deficit more quickly. Labour's argument for fiscal stimulus is based on Keynes's theory of general employment used from the end of the Second World War to the end of the 1970s. However, as well as wanting greater public spending on the economy, Keynes also contended that greater equilibrium or equality in the economy will lead to a more stable and sustainable development.

The end of the 1970s saw the rebirth of laissez-faire economics and globalisation. As regulation reduced or was weakened and government removed its direct influence on the economy, we saw a shift of investment in production away from Europe and a significant growth in the financial markets. Of late, shareholder rule, a desire for a quick and substantial return on investments, and a sizeable growth inequality has prevailed. The rich are now getting richer more quickly, the middle is getting squeezed, and the poorest are facing greater poverty and inequality. This was not and is not a fair economy.

This imbalance and reduced regulation precipitated the financial crisis as banks' investments became ever more leveraged and risky, as investment managers' bonuses became ever more linked to immediate returns to shareholders. Easy personal credit precipitated the housing bubbles and when people began to realise that perpetually making money out of unsustainable debt was a fantasy, it was too late. The house of cards came down and the

If Northern Ireland is to build a successful, fairer and sustainable economy it must pursue its goals of growing the private sector, but it must do this with the simultaneous goal of creating greater stability and equality.

wider imbalances in our economy have left Europe and America anaemically weak. The banks were bailed out and a private debt crisis has turned into a sovereign debt crisis in Europe.

What about Northern Ireland?

What does all this mean for Northern Ireland and how might we create a fairer economy today? Northern Ireland has been historically sheltered from the peaks and troughs of boom and bust economics due to our significant subvention from the Treasury. But added stability has also led to opportunity cost. We have historically had a weak private sector and a public sector that creates much of our multiplying economic activity. We have longstanding higher levels of economic inactivity rates than the rest of the UK and significantly lower average wages and standards of living. We have some of the most deprived wards in Europe and due to infrastructure deficits and geography we have high levels of fuel poverty. Add into this the fact that the subvention from the Treasury is unlikely to get any bigger and we are facing a difficult future.

Northern Ireland does not currently possess the powers to raise or lower taxes, redistribute wealth or set the minimum wage. We have micro-economic policies at our disposal, but as many people see our size as a weakness, in this instance it may be our relative strength. If Northern Ireland is to build a successful, fairer and sustainable economy it must pursue its goals of growing the private sector, but it must do this with the simultaneous goal of creating greater stability and equality. How?

Growing our private sector

There has to be a greater realisation, beyond those in the business community, that we need to grow the private sector to provide job opportunities - especially for young people and especially in light of the negative impact welfare reform proposals will have. We also must realise that in order to do this we are going to have to integrate ourselves into the world economy. Northern Ireland does not have a large enough internal market to drive meaningful job creation. Like the rest of the island, we must build our export base.

We must also look to the areas that we can grow - the knowledge economy, creative industries, tourism, the green economy and agri-foods. We need to take more calculated risks to get them going - this means, within EU rules, more direct government support; an innovative modern day industrial policy, delivered through public financing and leveraging private investment. This also means, where possible, changing the emphasis of spending on public services from curative spending to preventative, to make services more affordable and sustainable. To a greater or lesser extent the Executive is starting to do this.

Reducing inequality

However, this is only one half of the equation to building a fairer or good economy. There is nothing so far that will directly lead to better outcomes for those furthest from the job market or deliver less inequality.

First, we must greatly improve the educational outcomes for our young people. Allowing young people to leave school with no qualifications should be a matter of shame for our society. In an economy that will be driven by knowledge intensive industries, it is also unbelievably self-defeating. But this in itself will not be enough.

How we might create a fairer and simultaneously successful economy is through building meaningful,



Top: Will Hutton, Principal of Hertford College, Oxford University gives insights on 'creating the good economy' at NICVA's Economic Conference in November. Above: David McWilliams, economist, Will Hutton and Seamus McAleavey, Chief Executive of NICVA. Photos: NICVA

constructive and challenging partnerships between the main players in our economy. The Executive, business, the voluntary and community sector, the social economy and the trade unions working together could achieve innovative solutions to drive sustainable economic development, whilst delivering a healthy and much fairer society.

A new social contract

Will Hutton's recent idea of 'flexicurity' is a case in point. The Executive must set the goals and framework and give support to make this happen; in effect they must start framing a new social contract and a common idea of economic and social good.

The voluntary and community sector has always worked with the greater

public good in mind. This is why the sector and NICVA's Centre for Economic Empowerment are particularly well placed to start this debate and drive practical changes that will deliver for everyone in our society. CEE's recent economic conference, addressed by Will Hutton and David McWilliams, started the process of developing the idea that creating the good economy in Northern Ireland is in all our interests - this means building partnerships to create greater stability and mutually beneficial equality.

Claire Keatinge, newly appointed Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland, explains how poverty and the barriers to claiming their rightful benefits are contributing to older people's social exclusion.

AGE AND POVERTY

Interagency work needed



Having enough money to keep warm, well, active, and involved with family friends and community life is important for everybody. Our dignity, independ-

ence and opportunity to be full and active participants in society depend critically on having sufficient income to do the things we want to do.

Active community and family involvement make a significant contribution to our health and well-being - and this is certainly the case for older people. Older people who have the opportunity for regular social contact, to meet new people, participate in faith

activities, volunteer and contribute to our communities, support friends and family, undertake paid work, campaign and bring about positive change in society will feel the benefit in their personal self-worth and well-being.

And across all generations, society benefits from the active participation and positive contribution of older people.

Poverty

There are far too many ways in which older people are excluded from being active participants in civic life - and insufficient income is a very important one.

The fact that almost one in four of the people in Northern Ireland now live in poverty is unacceptable - constant worry about the cost of food, clothing, fuel, and inflation cause too many older people to be cold at home, isolated from activities of community life, and not have the nutrition that will support them to be healthy and well.

Barriers to claiming benefits

The difficulties and stigma for older people that are attached to making claims for means tested benefits are well known to Frontline readers. A2B (2009) estimate unclaimed benefit in Northern Ireland is between £1.2 million and £2.3 million per week. Per week!

The difference that that money would make to the older people who are entitled to it is very considerable indeed. There would also be a swift injection of this amount of money into the local economy as money that goes into older people's pockets is likely to be spent quickly and locally.

As Commissioner for Older People, I have been pleased to lend my support to the Social Security Agency 'make the call' campaign to provide a benefit health check and improve take-up of benefit entitlements amongst older people.

But the system remains too complicated and too much depends on the older person actively making a claim rather than on automatic payments and this will continue to deter and confuse many older people who will then not receive the benefits to which they are entitled.

Proposed welfare reform must ensure that the current levels of underclaiming by older people are addressed through simplified systems and processes. Web based and telephone contact are not always suitable for older people - and care must be taken to ensure adequate and effective face to face contact with benefits staff is in place together with assistance with completion of forms.

This assistance and support must be available through independent advice agencies as well as from Social Security Agency staff.

Fuel poverty

The take-up of current benefit entitlements needs to be coupled with a decisive focus on fuel poverty. Being cold at home and unable to afford to heat one's home is miserable and contributes to excess winter mortality and cold related illness.

The high cost of fuel, poor energy efficiency and low income combine to create a situation in which the majority of older people find that they cannot afford to heat their homes properly and at a level of warmth which they find comfortable.

Anxiety over fuel bills causes many older people a great deal of stress. Strong interagency and all party support is required to take local measures to address unfitness in housing as well as income levels generally for older people so that there is no need for any of our older population to be cold at home.



Photo: Andrew Ward

*Prince's Trust Northern Ireland director **Ian Jeffers** sees more and more young people caught in a cycle of poverty. He explains the Trust's programmes to tackle youth unemployment.*

TURNING YOUR LIFE AROUND

Helping young people out of cycle of poverty



Northern Ireland has rising levels of unemployment, particularly among young people who have few or no qualifications, no access to meaningful

work experience and, often, personal issues that prevent them from engaging in education, training or employment.

Most of those affected come from disadvantaged backgrounds with a family history of joblessness and educational underachievement. Latest Labour Force Survey figures show that 48,000 young people (over 21 per cent) are NEET (not in employment, education or training) throughout Northern Ireland. More than one in five children is growing up below the poverty line, with a widening aspiration gap between our richest and poorest young people.

We could now be witnessing the creation of a 'youth underclass' who tragically feel they have no future.

A knock-on effect of the sharp rise in youth unemployment is that young people with few or no qualifications are squeezed out of the labour market by unemployed graduates who are chasing jobs in retail, hospitality and catering industries because they cannot secure a job in their field.

The cost of youth unemployment

Between November 2010 and February 2011, The Prince's Trust held focus

groups in Northern Ireland with over 80 young people who had left care, disengaged from education or who had been involved in criminal activity or antisocial behaviour. Two of the issues highlighted were that 'coming from a deprived area and their accent' and 'having an offender background' put them at a disadvantage in getting a job.

Cost of Exclusion (Nov 2010), a report produced for The Prince's Trust by the London School of Economics, estimated the cost of youth unemployment in Northern Ireland at nearly £1m per week in Jobseeker's Allowance payments alone.

The Prince's Trust is committed to increasing the number of young people equipped for further education and work, resulting in more young adults

ready to make a full contribution to their community.

We aim to support young people to escape from poverty, help them take control of their futures and prevent them going down the path of long-term unemployment and, in certain circumstances, low level crime and anti-social behaviour.

Impact of poverty on aspirations

Research by The Prince's Trust and The Royal Bank of Scotland Group earlier this year suggested that all young people tend to start life with similarly high hopes but those from poorer homes are much more likely to lose confidence in their abilities and ambitions as they approach adulthood.

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Photo: Catherine Couvert

'We could now be witnessing the creation of a 'youth underclass' who tragically feel they have no future'

*Head of Policy at Advice NI **Kevin Higgins** explains partnership work being done with the Social Security Agency and Prince's Trust to alleviate poverty through increased benefit uptake.*

BENEFIT UPTAKE

Reducing poverty through promoting entitlement

Advice NI has won a number of benefit uptake contracts aimed at ensuring that people do not miss out on their full benefit entitlement, especially at this time of rising unemployment, welfare benefit changes and rising cost of living.

SSA Benefit Uptake Programme (2011/12)

The Programme for Government aims to drive a programme across Northern Ireland departments to reduce poverty and address inequality and disadvantage. The Benefit Uptake Programme is one of the Social Security Agency's actions to meet this objective. Its aim is

to provide additional support to people who need extra encouragement to find out about and claim all the benefits they should be getting. The Agency is committed to increasing benefit uptake through targeting the most vulnerable groups including older people, people with a disability and carers to ensure that people receive the financial assistance and services to which they are entitled.

Speaking at the launch of the 2011/2012 Benefit Uptake Programme, Social Development Minister Nelson McCausland issued a rallying call for people to claim benefits they may be entitled to:

'This year's Benefit Uptake Programme is vital, particularly in the

current climate of rising household costs across Northern Ireland. Last year over 1,300 people were better off by almost £50 a week following an entitlement check. This is a substantial amount that can make a real difference to the lives of the most vulnerable in our society.

This year, in partnership with Advice NI, we will directly target 25,000 people who may be entitled to additional benefits such as Attendance Allowance, Carer's Allowance and State Pension Credit, and offer them a benefit assessment.

I would strongly encourage customers to make sure they are not missing out on money that is rightfully theirs. I would also ask people to keep in mind those in their families or wider family circle who may be entitled to more money – such as an older relative, who could perhaps benefit from an entitlement check.'

Bob Stronge, Chief Executive of Advice NI reiterated the importance of the work: 'Advice NI is delighted to have secured the contract to deliver the Benefit Uptake Programme. We understand that many Northern Ireland households are struggling to make ends meet at this difficult time. Advice NI has a proven track record in successfully delivering benefit uptake work and our advisers will make every effort to increase benefit uptake for people who would otherwise miss out on unclaimed entitlement.'

SSA Innovation Fund

This year the Social Security Agency launched, on a pilot basis, an Innovation Fund of £250,000 to encourage partners in the voluntary and community sector to take a lead in testing new and fresh approaches to reaching people with potential benefit entitlement. Atlantic Philanthropies decided to make an additional investment of £125,000 to support the objectives of the Fund.

Seven separate projects have been funded by the Innovation Fund which will run for the next twelve months. Advice NI has been successful in obtaining funding for two projects.

The first is a partnership with employers to develop a twelve month 'In-Work: Top Up Your Income Service' to increase benefit uptake across NI amongst:

- part-time employees (including casual/agency staff and migrant workers);

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Bob Stronge, Chief Executive of Advice NI with Minister for Social Development Nelson McCausland MLA.
Photograph: Advice NI



Advice NI's new Tax and Benefits Advice Service has been running since early October 2011. The service is funded by HM Revenue & Customs in recognition of the fact that members of the public may need additional help with identifying, understanding and claiming their entitlements, and complying with their responsibilities in relation to HMRC products and services. Specifically, this includes tax credits, Child Benefit, and tax.

The service primarily targets 'vulnerable groups' of people, or those who find themselves in uncertain circumstances, or who are facing 'life changing events' such as the birth of a child, marital breakdown, or unemployment.

Since the launch of the service, over 500 people have received advice and information in relation to HMRC products and services. This has included those working in the advice sector who require specialist support on complex cases in relation to HMRC. The most common issues dealt with so far are:

- appealing entitlement to tax credits;
- disputing recoverability of tax credit overpayments;
- negotiating 'time to pay' arrangements between clients and HMRC's debt enforcement team;
- delays to Child Benefit and tax credit payments for foreign nationals who have come to live in Northern Ireland;
- rival tax credit claims, where two former partners both apply for Child Tax Credit in respect of the same child;
- entitlement to tax credits and Child Benefit for young people aged under 20 who are parents themselves;
- disputing liability for underpaid tax through the Extra Statutory Concession (ESC A19);
- issues surrounding income tax for pensioners.

A lack of advice provision was quickly identified for young parents in terms of tax and benefit issues, when and how to claim and the effects of claiming in their own right as opposed to their parent or carer claiming on their behalf.

A high proportion of the clients availing of the service so far have been lone parents. Advice NI has also been working with organisations such as Ulster Supported Employment Limited (USEL) to provide face to face advice to clients with disabilities. For people who find themselves in difficult financial circumstances, repayment of tax credit overpayments can exacer-

*Advice NI Tax and Benefits adviser **Jennie Hammond** presents the new advice and information service for vulnerable groups and those facing life changing events.*

ADVISING THE VULNERABLE

Advice NI's Tax and Benefits Advice Service

bate their existing situation, therefore advisers working within Advice NI's Debt Action project also ensure that their clients have access to the Tax and Benefits service where appropriate. The Tax and Benefits advisers work closely with South Tyrone Empowerment Programme in Dungannon to ensure that minority ethnic and other vulnerable groups of clients have access to face to face advice, with the aid of an interpreter if required.

Strong working relationships have been developed with HMRC, the Low Income Tax Reform Group (LITRG), TaxHelp for Older People (TOP), and various other organisations, enhancing the overall service provided.

The project will publish a range of multi-lingual online self-help resources. These will be available through the Advice NI website www.adviceni.net and officially launched early in 2012. Resources will include:

- downloadable self-help leaflets
- interactive self-help flash books
- benefits calculator
- online referral forms for face to face advice
- interactive 'find your local advice centre' map
- dynamic Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- latest news

The service offers free, independent and confidential advice and support on tax and benefits issues. People can avail of the service through a nationwide Freephone helpline and a number of outreach venues throughout Northern Ireland, including Belfast, Ballymena, Dungannon and Magherafelt.

For phone advice or to arrange an appointment for face to face advice please call our Freephone helpline between 9am and 1pm, Monday to Friday, on 0800 988 2377, or email tax@adviceni.net.

Tax and benefits advisers Jennie Hammond and Sue Stevenson at Advice NI AGM.

Photo: Nigel Hunter, AVEC



Evelyn Collins, Chief Executive, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, charts the progress of efforts to eradicate gender inequality and the work still to be done.

LONG ROAD AHEAD

Women and equality in Northern Ireland



Thirty five years have passed since the introduction of laws in Northern Ireland protecting people against sex discrimination. There is plenty of evidence of progress and

achievement in terms of equality between women and men.

Progress

The female employment rate has risen steadily - from 59 percent in 1976 to its current level of 61.4 percent. The pay gap has also narrowed, with women in Northern Ireland now earning around 96.5 percent of what men earn based on median hourly earnings, compared to 70 per cent in the 1970s.

Women are also working in a broader range of occupations and industries than they were then; we have women engineers, fire fighters and bus drivers as well as in the boardroom and the higher echelons of the Civil Service. Women comprised only six percent of the Senior Civil Service in Northern Ireland in 1993, now they comprise almost 30 percent. Before 1975, there were no maternity rights, now all pregnant employees are entitled to a full year's maternity leave, with statutory maternity pay period of 39 weeks.

Remaining inequalities

But too many inequalities still exist. There are notable gender differences in employment rates between the sexes in Northern Ireland - 71 percent of working age males are in employment compared with 61.4 percent of females. This represents a narrowing of the gap between female and male employment rates compared to five years ago, when it was 60.7 percent for females and 72.7 percent for males.

Northern Ireland is ranked bottom of the twelve UK regions (2009) in terms of the rate of early stage entrepreneurial activity among women - 2.4 percent are women, compared to eight percent men.

Difficulties in accessing affordable, quality childcare remain a major issue and exacerbate the problems experienced by women who wish to enter or re-enter the labour market. Northern Ireland continues to have one of the lowest levels of childcare provision within the UK.

Such structural inequalities in the labour market continue to make it more difficult for women to participate on an equal basis with men and there is evidence of the persistence of stereotypical attitudes about the role of women and men in society. And it is disturbing to note that discrimination on grounds of pregnancy is still the most frequent ground of sex discrimination complaint to the Equality Commission - and that sexual harassment at work remains a real concern.

Challenging discrimination

When people believe that they are being treated unfairly at work, it can be a very difficult decision to take the professional and personal risks involved in confronting it. That can be especially true for women when they challenge attitudes and behaviour which discriminate against them because of their sex.

In the year ended 31 March 2011, our legal advice line at the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland took 853 calls on gender discrimination, that's 28 percent of all calls. That makes gender discrimination our second biggest cause for complaint, after disability. Of these gender calls, almost 78 percent are to do with discrimination at work; and cases involve employers of all sizes, from both public and private sectors.

The Commission also does extensive work with employers and business people, providing training, advice and support on all aspects of employment



'It is disturbing to note that discrimination on grounds of pregnancy is still the most frequent ground of sex discrimination complaint'

equality, including gender, and on equality issues around the delivery of services.

Calling for legal reform

The Equality Commission is also highlighting the need for legislative reform.

While Northern Ireland led the way in the provisions of equality legislation for many years, following the implementation of the Equality Act 2010 we now lag behind Great Britain in a number of areas, including protections for women. We have been campaigning for some years now for reform of existing equality laws, including a call for the amendment of the sex equality legislation. We believe it should make it unlawful for public bodies to subject women (or men) to unlawful sex discrimination and harassment when exercising their public functions.

This is a significant gap as it means that an individual (man or woman) does not have protection under the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 against discrimination on grounds of sex in, for example, prisons or other places of detention, or as regards applications for asylum, or the denial of primary health care services, or access to shelters for asylum seekers, victims of domestic violence or trafficking.

Women hit by public sector cuts

With Northern Ireland now facing a harsh economic climate, decisions will be made which must particularly affect our very large public sector. Until the recent economic downturn, women in Northern Ireland had been experiencing historically high levels of employment. 46 percent of those currently in employment are women, compared to 41 percent in 1984.

Of all female full-time employees, 59 percent are employed in public administration, education and health and social care. So budget cuts could hit women particularly hard and reverse some of the gains of the past decades.

In taking policy decisions, including budget and spending decisions, the law

here already provides that equality considerations are to be taken into account. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 provides the statutory means, by requiring that all public bodies, including government departments, pay due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity. This involves assessing the impact their policy decisions may have across nine equality grounds, including gender.

The Commission has been advising government departments on the statutory requirement to assess policies from

an equality perspective and to underline the importance and value of the legal provisions in these difficult times. We have also held discussions with all government departments on how these obligations can be met.

Committed to equality

The Commission remains committed to advancing equality for women using the tools of public policy and the law, supporting and advising women, and to challenging discrimination where we find it.

Northern Ireland
Ombudsman

Reassessment of property evaluation

This case concerned the actions of Land and Property Services (LPS) with regard to the revision of the valuation of the complainant's business premises following the construction of an extension there in 2004, and the determination that he owed arrears of rates amounting to more than £60,000.

The complainant was aggrieved that LPS had delayed in undertaking its reassessment of his property's valuation. He also complained that LPS did not then give him enough notice of the increased direct debit rates payments that resulted from the reassessed valuation. In addition, he considered that it had failed to provide him with an explanation of how the new valuation had been determined, including justification for part of the increase in valuation, which was due to the correction of measurement errors that LPS had made in a previous valuation survey undertaken in 1995. In particular, the complainant was aggrieved that LPS had determined that, for the purpose of calculating his rating liability, both elements of the increase in the valuation (arising from the extension works he had completed and from the correction of the previous survey errors) should be backdated to 2004. Additionally, he considered it unfair that he should have to pay arrears based on the correction of errors made in 1995, well before he had acquired the property, when no such demand was also being made of previous owners.

The Ombudsman's investigation found evidence of a number of instances of maladministration. Most significantly, it established that the LPS had incorrectly applied the provisions of Rates (Northern Ireland) Order 1977 in determining that both elements of the increase in property valuation should be applied from 2004. In addition, it found that there had been an unreasonable delay of almost four years before LPS had undertaken the inspection of the complainant's property and completed its revision of its valuation. LPS had also failed to provide a timely and accurate explanation of that revised valuation and the impact of the 1995 measurement errors.

The Ombudsman found no evidence of maladministration on the part of LPS with regard to the notice it had given to the complainant of the revised direct debit payments due from him or in relation to its decision not to require previous owners of the property to pay arrears of rates resulting from the correction of the 1995 errors.

By way of redress for the injustice caused as a consequence of the failings identified, the Ombudsman recommended that the LPS Chief Executive issue a written apology to the complainant and make a consolatory payment of £9,000. In addition, the Ombudsman recommended that LPS recalculate the complainant's rating liability on the basis of the correct application of the Rates (NI) Order 1997. He also recommended that LPS ensured that its staff were fully aware of the correct application of the rates legislation and that in communicating lessons learned in this case, it reminded staff of the need to be vigilant in undertaking valuation assessments or reviews in order that any other cases which might have been handled in the same inaccurate manner could be identified and appropriate remedial action taken.

The Chief Executive accepted the Ombudsman's recommendations.

POLICY UPDATE

Ursula O'Hare, Assistant Director (Policy and Publications) at Law Centre (NI), rounds-up recent legal and policy developments.



Dilnot Review Commissioner Dame Jo Williams and Eugene Rooney, Director of Primary and Community Care, DHSSPS, speakers at a roundtable organised by Law Centre (NI) and Age (NI) last September to discuss the future of long term care. Photo: Michael Beggs

Social security

Welfare Reform Bill

The Welfare Reform Bill is not expected to receive Royal Assent in Westminster until March 2012, meaning that it will be late spring at least before a Northern Ireland version is introduced into the Assembly.

The temptation will be to go for accelerated passage in order to keep the sequencing of change to the benefit system as close as possible to that in Britain. It would be hard, however, to defend accelerated passage as the Bill heralds the biggest changes to the social security system in a generation and a number of issues will require a response tailored to reflect local circumstances. Provision, for example, will need to be made for the Social Fund which in Britain will be passed to local authorities. Equally, arrangements need to be made for domestic rates which do not apply in Britain.

It is important that the opportunity for full scrutiny by the Assembly is not lost. Not least because the Department for Social Development's recent

equality impact assessment on the Bill was poorly lacking in data about the impact of the proposed reforms on the Section 75 groups. Scrutiny affords the opportunity for the Committee to fully explore the real impact of the Bill on local communities.

The Westminster Bill is still in the Lords where a number of amendments have been fought over, including the so-called 'bedroom tax' which would cut Housing Benefit to households deemed to be under-occupying their homes (ie having one or more spare bedrooms). The Lords defeated the Government by introducing an amendment to the Bill to allow tenants to retain full Housing Benefit where they have no more than one spare room or where no other appropriate alternative accommodation is available. This defeat is being reversed by the Coalition Government.

The Lords also voted against the government's proposals in the Welfare Reform Bill supporting amendments to:

- retain automatic eligibility for ESA for young disabled people who are unable to work;

- extend the time limit for contributory-based ESA to two years, overriding the Government's proposal that claimants be reassessed after twelve months;
- exempt cancer patients from the proposed ESA limit.

Other amendments on childcare, Disability Living Allowance and Housing Benefit caps have yet to be debated before the Bill returns to the Commons where, of course, MPs may reverse some of the successes in the Lords.

In an expression of the depth of feeling about the Bill, in December, the Scottish Parliament voted against giving legislative consent to the Welfare Reform Bill that would have permitted the Westminster to introduce the changes in Scotland. Unlike Northern Ireland, social security is not a devolved matter in Scotland. While the Scottish Parliament cannot block the Bill, the refusal of legislative consent means that the Scottish Parliament will now establish its own parliamentary committee to enable it to fully scrutinise the Bill and its implications.

Housing Benefit reform

Regulations come into force in January 2012 that implement changes to the eligibility for the single room rate from 25 to 35 (Housing Benefit (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (NI) 2011).

Housing charities and others had argued that the impact of restricting eligibility to the (higher) single room rate to those aged 35 and over would be particularly felt by non-resident parents whose ability to enjoy contact with their children may be affected. The impact on ex-offenders and people with mental health problems and the likely potential rise in the levels of homelessness were also of critical concern to those working on behalf of these groups.

A prayer of annulment debate took place in the Assembly in October in an attempt to stop the regulations from coming into force but was defeated. While many MLAs expressed concern about the impact of the new rule, there was no cross-party support for blocking the regulations because of concerns about parity.

Community care

Review of health and social care

The Compton Review of Health and Social Care reported to the Health Minister in December. The Review was set up by the Minister to review provision of health and social care, including the interface between the health and social care systems. In presenting the Review's report to the Assembly, Health Minister Edwin Poots emphasised the promotion of prevention and early intervention measures with the 'overarching objective of avoiding unnecessary hospital admissions in the first place.'

Alongside proposals for change to acute hospital provision, the report sets out proposals for the creation of 'Integrated Care Partnerships' and a shift from care in hospitals to care in the community where appropriate. While the Minister insisted that the proposals are not about cost-cutting, budget shifts are envisaged to implement the report's recommendations and the

proof will be in the pudding.

These proposals for reform come at a time when decisions about funding adult social care have yet to be determined. No process equivalent to that of the Dilnot Commission (which completed its review of funding long term care in England last summer) has yet been undertaken locally. You can read the Compton Review at www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/transforming-your-care-re-view-of-hsc-ni-final-report.pdf.

Trafficking

The Council of Europe's Expert Group on Anti-Trafficking (GRETA), which has responsibility for monitoring state compliance with the European anti-Trafficking Convention, is due to report later this year on how the UK is complying with its obligations. A GRETA delegation visited Northern Ireland in the Autumn to hear from a range of groups, statutory and voluntary, about

steps that have been taken to fulfil the UK's responsibility to protect the victims of trafficking. GRETA's report is expected in June.

Tribunal reform

The Department of Justice published a pre-consultation paper on tribunal reform in December. The paper seeks views on a range of issues including the creation of an Employment Appeal Tribunal for Northern Ireland (unlike England and Wales where an appeal lies to the EAT, appeals from the Industrial and Fair Employment Tribunal in Northern Ireland go to the Court of Appeal); a single tribunal structure and arrangements for oversight and judicial independence. The paper is available at www.dojni.gov.uk/index/public-consultations/current-consultations/tribunal-reform-discussion-paper-.pdf

Law Centre (NI) discusses welfare reform with all party groups on disability

For the first time, All-Party Groups on Learning Disability, Visual Impairments and Disability have held a joint meeting to discuss the impact of Welfare Reform on people with disabilities living in Northern Ireland.

The 29 November meeting gave MLAs Patsy McGlone SDLP, Jim Wells DUP, Mark Durkan SDLP and Chris Lyttle Alliance the chance to hear the views of people with a disability, family carers and representatives from the disability sector on the impact of welfare reform.

The groups expressed concerns about changes to Housing Benefit, Disability Living Allowance and other benefits and highlighted the need for proper parliamentary scrutiny by the Northern Ireland Assembly when the proposals come to Northern Ireland in 2012.

Presentations were given by Paul McGowan of Mencap, Ricky Rowledge, Director of Council for the Homeless NI, Laura Niwa from Law Centre, Kevin Doherty from Disability Action and Harry Reid from Royal National Institute for the Blind.



MLAs and disability sector representatives at the NI Assembly. Photo: Mencap

SOCIAL SECURITY UPDATE



Personal independence payment

Second draft of assessment regulations

Daniel Breslin, social security adviser at Law Centre (NI), explains how assessment criteria in the proposed new Personal Independent Payment are likely to work.

The second working draft of the proposed Personal Independence Payment (PIP) Regulations has now been published. As it is a working draft, amendments will be made at a later stage.

The proposed regulations set out how a claimant who has Limited or Severely Limited daily living or mobility activities will be assessed.

Assessment

The assessment will involve a face to face consultation with an independent assessor. The new assessment will include advice provided by an assessor who will collect evidence from a wide range of sources such as professionals involved in supporting the claimant. The assessor will advise the Department

tal decision maker who will make the final decision on entitlement using all the evidence. There will be a paper-based assessment in certain cases such as claimants with the most severe impairments where enough evidence already exists to make a final decision.

In written evidence to Parliament on the proposal to replace DLA with PIP, the Department for Work and Pensions stated:

‘The purpose of the new assessment for Personal Independence Payment is to allow the Department to determine entitlement to the benefit in a more accurate, objective and consistent way than happens in DLA, ensuring that the benefit is focused on those with the greatest need’.¹

Qualifying criteria

The proposed new benefit will have two components – a daily living component and a mobility component. Each component will have two rates:

- daily living component standard rate;
- daily living component enhanced rate;
- mobility component standard rate;
- mobility component enhanced rate.

In determining entitlement, the new assessment qualifying criteria will be encapsulated in a structured pre-determined schedule of activities, similar to the current scoring method in Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

Under PIP, there will be nine descriptors with varying criteria set out in respect of daily living and two descriptors with criteria in respect of mobility. As with ESA, each of the criteria in a descriptor under PIP will have a points’ score which will reflect a claimant’s level of ability within the descriptor. A claimant’s entitlement to components in the daily living and mobility components will be determined by reference to the scores obtained.

The following example, relating to preparing food and drink and taking nutrition, shows illustrates the proposed new criteria and scoring system.

Table 1: Activity 1 Descriptors

Activity	Descriptors	Points
Preparing food and drink	a. Can prepare and cook a simple meal unaided	0
	b. Needs to use an aid or appliance to either prepare or cook a simple meal	2
	c. Cannot cook a simple meal using a conventional cooker but can do so using a microwave.	2
	d. Needs prompting to either prepare or cook a simple meal	2
	e. Needs supervision to either prepare or cook a simple meal	4
	f. Needs assistance to either prepare or cook a simple meal	4
	g. Cannot prepare and cook food and drink at all	8

There are two descriptor columns proposed in relation to the daily living components of cooking preparation and taking nutrition. Each component is scored accordingly.

Example Descriptor 1

Activity 1 – Preparing food and drink

This activity considers a person's ability to prepare a simple meal. This is not a reflection of an individual's cooking skills but instead a consideration of the impact of impairment on ability to perform the tasks required. It assesses ability to open packaging, serve food, pour a drink, peel and chop food and use a microwave oven or cooker hob to cook or heat food [see Table 1].

Activity 2 – Taking nutrition

This activity considers an individual's ability to be nourished, either by cutting food into pieces, conveying to the mouth, chewing and swallowing; or through the use of therapeutic sources. A therapeutic source means parenteral or enteral tube feeding using a rate limiting device such as a delivery system or feed pump [see Table 2].

Definitions

Some definitions of the activities, aids and appliances that may arise in this descriptor are as follows.

- Preparing food means the activities required to make food ready for cooking and eating, such as peeling and chopping.
- Cooking food means cooking or heating at above waist height – for example, using a microwave oven or on a cooker hob. It does not consider the ability to bend down – for example, to access an oven.
- A simple meal is a cooked one-course meal for one from fresh ingredients.
- In this activity, aids and appliances could, for example include prosthesis, perching stool, lightweight pots and pans, easy grip handles on utensils and single lever arm taps.

Activity	Descriptors	Points
Taking Nutrition	a. Can take nutrition unaided	0
	b. Needs either: (i) to use an aid or appliance to take nutrition; or (ii) assistance to cut up food	2
	c. Needs a therapeutic source to take nutrition	2
	d. Needs prompting to take nutrition	4
	e. Needs assistance to manage a therapeutic source to take nutrition	6
	f. Needs another person to convey food and drink to their mouth	10

Discussion

As can be seen from the above schedule, these criteria are more rigid and objective than the current subjective cooking test in DLA. Advisers will also see the use of familiar terms arising from past caselaw in the criteria above, eg the use of a cooker hob and microwave for instance, emphasising that cooking is done at waist height.

Under PIP proposals, there are two components of daily living directed at preparing a meal and taking nutrition. It is the consensus of many advisers that some claimants on the low rate of DLA at present in respect of the cooking test would not qualify if making a claim under PIP. Will a claimant who only scores points under descriptor 1 qualify for a payment?

As a qualifying threshold has not been set down yet, it seems unlikely that any points scored under descriptor 1 would qualify for payment, as that would be setting a very low threshold. It is more likely that points scored from activity descriptor 2 entitled 'Taking nutrition' when added to scores from descriptor 1 just might qualify, provided it is a high combined score. This remains uncertain until the qualifying thresholds are agreed in respect of daily living.

Who qualifies for PIP?

- PIP will only apply to people of working age (16–64) from April 2013.
- All existing DLA claimants will be assessed for PIP.
- Claimants will need to meet the disability conditions for PIP for a period of six months and be expected to continue to meet them for a further six months.
- The government intends to develop a specific child assessment before

the new PIP is applied to children. Work on this area is ongoing.

- People over the age of 65 or state pension age, whichever is higher, will not be entitled to PIP. Persons with entitlement to an award of PIP before the age of 65 will continue to receive benefit provided they continue to meet the relevant criteria.

Residence and presence conditions

It is proposed that the Habitual Residence test will be applied to all claimants. Claimants must not be subject to immigration control, be present in the UK and have been present for an aggregate period of 26 weeks in the previous 52 weeks immediately preceding the date a claim is made. There is also the proposal to fix temporary absence at four weeks rather than the current 26 weeks under DLA.

Subject to change

As stated earlier, these are draft proposals which could change when finalised. The draft assessment regulations, however, reflect current government thinking on how the new PIP may eventually be set out.

To find out more about the proposals, you can read:

- Personal Independence Payment: second draft of assessment regulations – November 2011;
- Personal Independence Payment: second draft of assessment criteria – an explanatory note to support the second draft of the assessment regulations – November 2011.

1. Proposal to replace Disability Living Allowance with Personal Independence Payment. Written evidence submitted by the Department for Work and Pensions (PIP53) para 79.



Photo: Catherine Cornibert

'3 out of 4 young people who complete our programmes progress into education, training or employment'

There is now a clear aspiration gap, with almost one in six young people in Northern Ireland believing that they will 'end up in a dead-end job', while more than one in seven feel they will 'end up on benefits for at least part of their lives.'

Young people aged sixteen to 25 who have an offending background, are leaving the care system or have disengaged from education and who live in deprived areas need support to address a range of issues. These include having few or no qualifications, long-term unemployment which can produce feelings of inadequacy and depression, low self-esteem, little motivation or aspirations for their future, boredom and the absence of positive role models or support structures in their lives.

In Northern Ireland, The Prince's Trust helps on average 3,000 disadvantaged young people aged thirteen to 30 every year to realise their potential through practical support, work experience and financial assistance. Over 22 per cent are offenders or ex-offenders and three out of every four

young people who complete our programmes progress into education, training or employment.

Prince's Trust programmes

Team programme: twelve week personal development programme, in association with the six Further Education colleges. This includes team residential, restorative community project, work experience and 'next steps to employment assistance' to help disadvantaged young people to move into education, training or employment. This year the Team Programme will help around 500 young people throughout Northern Ireland.

Get into: four week employability programme that delivers intensive, sector specific training and work placements for young people who are work ready but lack the necessary experience or qualifications in, for example: cooking, retail, youth work or the catering and hospitality industry. This year the programme will support 240 young people.

Enterprise: a four day explore enterprise programme and up to two years business mentoring from a trained volunteer helping young people interested in business and self-employment to explore and test their business ideas, receive business start-up grants and loans to become their own boss. Over the past three years, the Enterprise Programme has supported over 350 young people into business. Young Entrepreneurs have received over £120K in grant awards and over £1m in low cost business start-up loans.

xl: supports young people at risk of truanting, exclusion or academic underachievement by boosting their confidence, self esteem, motivation and ultimately re-engaging them in education and training. Run in association with over 80 secondary schools, EOTAS Centres and youth clubs.

This year we will be working with 1,400 young people. Over 90 per cent of xl club participants continue their education or move into training or employment.

One to One Project: Delivered in Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre, this enables former offenders (sup-

porters) to help young offenders make the successful transition from custody back into the community. Trained supporters befriend young offenders, share their life experience, help arrange practical support and accommodation for young offenders and aim to inspire them to turn their life around.

More information on The Prince's Trust in Northern Ireland can be found on:

www.princes-trust.org.uk/about_the_trust/in_your_region/northern_ireland.aspx

or telephone: 028 90754 5454

FEATURE | **Benefit uptake**

Continued from page 18

- employees who are nearing the end of a statutory sick pay period;
- employees nearing retirement age or in work beyond retirement;
- employees facing redundancy.

The second Advice NI Innovation Fund project is a partnership with The Prince's Trust to deliver a new benefit uptake service across Northern Ireland aimed at disadvantaged and vulnerable young people aged sixteen to 30:

- developing and delivering benefit uptake awareness raising sessions for staff with the aim of increasing awareness of the new service and highlighting the importance of the benefit uptake issue;
- delivering benefit assessments and providing support directly to young people via The Prince's Trust's personal development programmes.

Speaking about the Fund, Minister McCausland said:

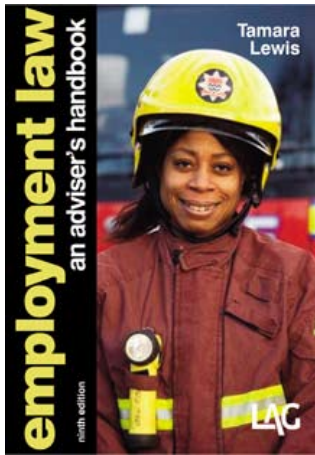
'This is a new way of working for the Agency. It is trying, through further partnership working, to test new and innovative ways of reaching people who may not be claiming their full benefit entitlement.'

For further information in relation to Advice NI's benefit uptake initiatives, please contact Advice NI via the website www.adviceni.net

REVIEWS

Employment law: An Adviser's Handbook

By Tamara Lewis. Published by LAG. Price £38.00.



Tamara Lewis' *Employment Law: An Adviser's Handbook* provides employment legal advisers with a comprehensive guide to a wide range of employment law areas. This text is an extremely valuable resource as it both sets out the law on a number of employment issues and provides useful practical guidance in advising on legal problems and bringing claims to tribunal.

Written in clear and accessible language, the handbook is an excellent companion to advisers, particularly those who are new to employment law or unfamiliar with the field. It covers a range of areas including wages, unfair dismissal, redundancy and discrimination. Lewis gives a thorough synopsis of each of these topics in a concise and understandable way, dealing 'most thoroughly with subjects which frequently come up for advisers of low-paid workers'. The result is that the text is largely directed at advisers to claimants and gives useful guidance on tailoring advice to the needs of employees.

The handbook has valuable practical advice in relation to the procedures involved in bringing employment cases to tribunal. From lodging claims to conducting tribunal hearings, it provides a complete overview of employment tribunal procedures, and gives effective practical suggestions to advisers undertaking this process. In addition, it contains helpful appendices with checklists and sample documents

for use as a basis when giving advice and running cases.

It should be noted that given the focus on the practical aspects of employment law, as the author acknowledges herself, in some cases 'further research may be necessary on the law itself in new, developing, specialist or complex areas.' Further, caution must be exercised when using this text as an advice guide in Northern Ireland as some of the legislation referred to may not be relevant in this

jurisdiction, eg the Equality Act 2010. Overall, Lewis' guide deals effectively with many of the employment law issues that frequently face legal advisers and provides a useful insight into the practical aspects of employment law. This makes it a particularly valuable resource for those who are new or unfamiliar with the area and an excellent introduction to the field of employment law.

Niamh McKenna, Intern, Law Centre (NI)

LIBRARY NEWS

Books and reports

Briefings on assistance to trafficked people and trafficked children – Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group 2011.

Concordat between the voluntary and community sector and the Northern Ireland government. DSD, 2011.

An independent review of the Work Capability Assessment for Northern Ireland, Sept 2011 by Prof Malcolm Harrington. NI Assembly, 2011.

Protecting the rights of Roma – Council of Europe, 2011

Securing fairness and redress: administrative justice at risk? Administrative Justice & Tribunals Council October (AJTC) 2011.

Articles

Ageing behind bars, with particular reference to older women in prisons, by Azrini Wahidin.

Irish Probation Journal vol. 8 – Oct 2011

Disability in social housing Part II – Adviser (148) Nov/Dec 2011

Migrant communities: key factors that predispose them to risks of poverty – Journal of Poverty and Social Justice 19 (3) Oct 2011

Staying power– Carrie Kus examines the protection from eviction for people hanging on after a tenancy has ended. Adviser Nov/Dec 2011.

Tackling homelessness and multiple exclusion – Community Care 24 November 2011

Welfare reform changes and housing, by Fiona Douglas, Housing Rights Service. Housing Rights Review, November 2011.

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Legal Research Skills for Advisers	29 February

Western Area

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