

CAN YOU CLAIM IT?

FINAL REPORT

Background

In January 2007 a group of local organisations met to discuss improving benefit take up across communities in Woking and Runnymede boroughs. A secondary aim was also discussed; to improve health and wellbeing primarily through raising awareness of local services and support. Previous take-up campaigns have targeted specific groups especially older people and this work continues with many organisations across the county actively referring clients to the Pensions Service. Instead it was decided to test a different approach. The group agreed to run the campaign for a week using the main shopping areas in the two boroughs, and in particular the large supermarkets. "Can You Claim It?" was created.

Participating Organisations

North West Surrey Association of Disabled People (NWSADP)
Surrey Welfare Rights Unit (SWRU)
Woking Citizens Advice Bureau
Runnymede Citizens Advice Bureau
Woking Borough Council (WBC)
Runnymede Borough Council (RBC)
Surrey County Council
Local Pensions Service
Surrey PCT
Jobcentre Plus

Developing the Project

NWSADP undertook to arrange the venues, facilitate the campaign meetings and organise media coverage. SWRU agreed to coordinate referrals, manage the data and draft this final report. A sub-committee was formed of NWSADP, SWRU and SCC to develop the publicity materials and fundraise for the campaign. The sub-committee met regularly in addition to the main campaign committee meetings. Publicity materials in the form of posters, leaflets, pens and pads were designed and ordered. Permissions

were sought from the supermarkets that had been identified and WBC agreed to the use of their exhibition vehicle.

The campaigns were advertised locally through press releases and press attended the Woking campaign on Wednesday 13th to take photos.

Woking Week: 11 – 16 June 2007

Monday	Sheerwater neighbourhood shops
Tuesday	Sainsbury's, Knaphill
Wednesday	Waitrose, Goldsworth Park
Thursday	Brooklands Centre, Byfleet
Friday	Maybury Centre
Saturday	Woking Market and Wolsey Place

Runnymede Week: 12 – 15 June 2007

Tuesday	Tesco, Addlestone
Wednesday	Tesco, Egham
Thursday	Tesco, Addlestone
Friday	Chertsey Health Centre

Funding

Applications were made to local committees, partnership board and individual Councillors for funds. Runnymede Borough Council contributed £250 towards the publicity costs. Woking Borough Council agreed to match fund any monies secured from the County Council and they agreed to provide the publicity boards for the WBC exhibition vehicle. In total, funds of £9250 were secured.

Volunteers

When it came to organising attendance on each day of the campaign the proposal was to have a combination of volunteers and staff from the participating organisations. St Peter's Resource Centre (now Woking Disability Resource Centre) was identified as a potential source of volunteers keen to participate in the campaign. Two awareness raising sessions provided by SWRU were run at the centre. These focussed on skills for engaging members of the public and how to promote benefit take-

up. Volunteers from St Peter's Resource Centre participated throughout the week long campaign.

Volunteers from NWSADP and Runnymede CABx also participated in the campaign.

Referrals

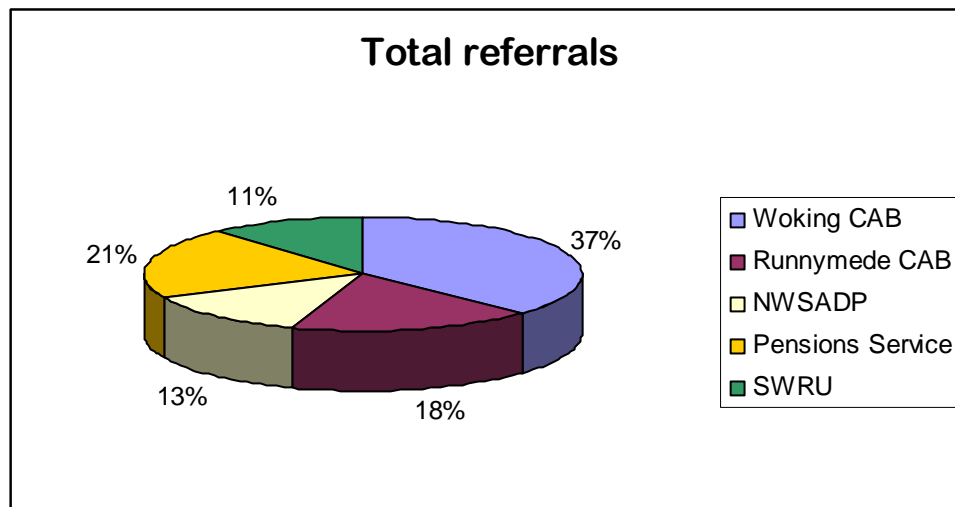
Because of the nature of the campaign, (being outside and targeting shoppers), it was agreed that no advice would be given on the spot. Instead, people would be encouraged to contact the campaign via a Freephone number or the campaign staff could take their details and forward them to their local advice organisation who would contact them directly. The freephone number was located at SWRU who agreed to take the messages, keep the database and refer on the contacts to the participating advice organisations who were Runnymede and Woking CABx, NWSADP and Pensions Service. SWRU undertook to deal with contacts who lived in neither borough.

Due to the unknown number of potential referrals and the very limited resource at SWRU a procedure was agreed whereby clients would be forwarded on for advice with outline details only.

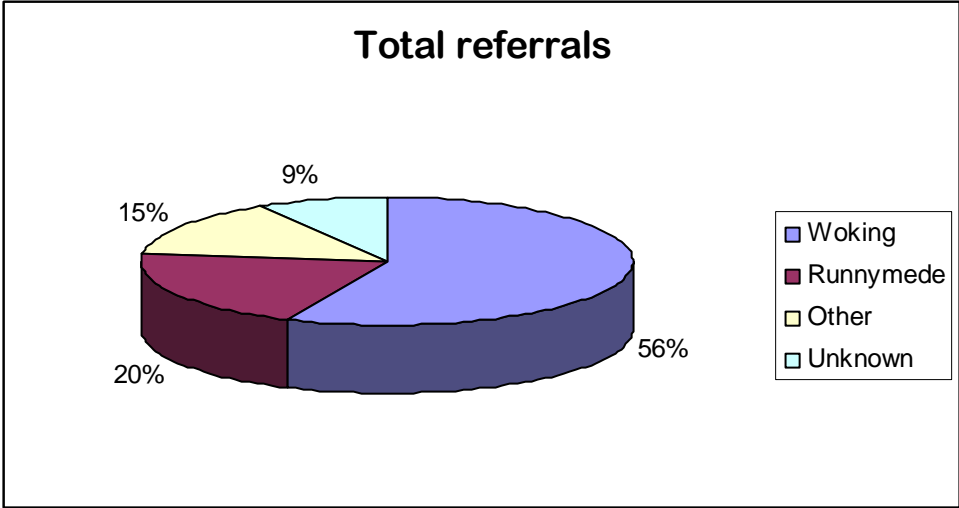
Referral Data

Total campaign referrals: 141

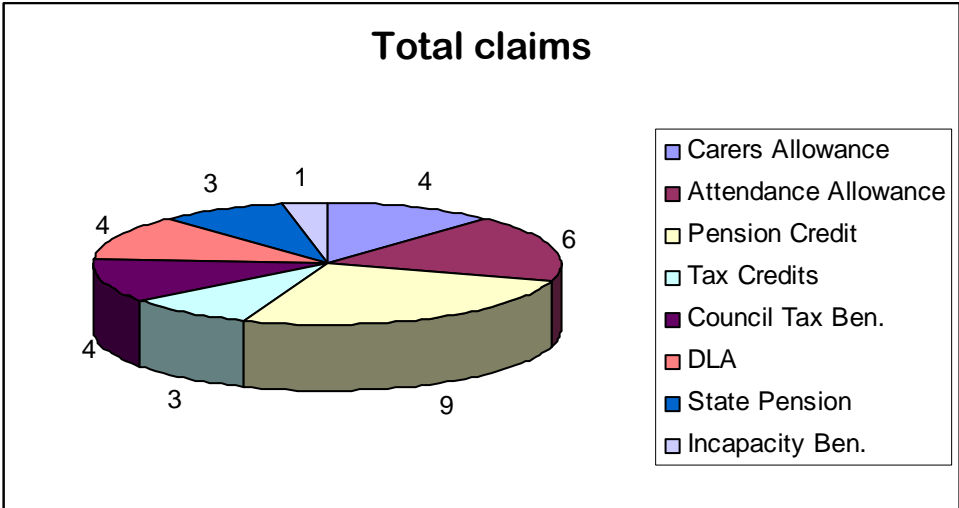
Referrals by organisation:



Referrals by borough:



Total benefit claims:



In total 34 benefit claims were made including 3 DLA claims for disabled children, a State Pension increase for a widow and a claim for Incapacity Benefit for a severely mentally unwell 19 year old. In addition to these claims advice was given on many other benefits either specifically or as part of an overall benefit check. Also, advice was provided on council services, blue badges, Warm Front grants, milk tokens and help with NHS costs.

There has only been confirmation of 13 of these claim awards, 3 Pension Credit, 5 Attendance Allowance, 3 State Pension and 2 Carer's Allowance. However, a very conservative estimate of the overall annual benefit gain for clients is £93,506. This means that a similar campaign run over a year instead of just a week could raise almost £5m.

55 referrals were male ie: 39%. Of the contacts outside Woking or Runnymede these came from Guildford, Elmbridge, Surrey Heath, Kingston and Berkshire. There appeared to be little difference in the number of referrals from each day despite very contrasting locations.

Closer analysis of the Woking borough postcodes reveals that 30% of contacts had a Maybury and Sheerwater postcode. The Woking boroughs with the fewest referrals were Hook Heath and Mount Hermon.

Case Studies

1. Client A had been refused Housing and Council Tax Benefit. She was helped to appeal the decision. The Council had incorrectly calculated her income from her pensions and she was entitled to some benefit. The appeal was successful and she was awarded benefit back to February 2007.
2. Client B suffers with several grand mal episodes every month. He was turned down for DLA early in 2007. Has reclaimed and again was refused. Is now being supported to appeal the decision.
3. Couple C have a 5 year old with autism. Mum contacted the campaign and was helped to claim middle rate care component and lower rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance for her son. She can now claim Carer's Allowance and will receive a national insurance credit for each week she receives the allowance. Annual gain for the family is £5663.
4. Couple D have 18 month old twins, both affected by meningitis as babies. The campaign helped with a claim for lower rate care component of Disability Living Allowance for one of the twins who has needs over and above other 18 month old babies.

Issues Raised by the Campaign

- It was clear from the early planning stages that the non-targetted approach of this campaign would be viewed as a pilot. However, some feedback has raised concerns about the success of the campaign and whether this blanket method is efficient.
- Despite the non-targetted approach, in the Woking campaign 30% of referrals lived in more deprived wards of Maybury and Sheerwater.
- After the dates had been set for several months it was pointed out that the week was also Carer's Week which placed resource issues on some of the partners.
- Further data regarding client profiles would be useful for identifying need and targeting services.
- Staff time was underestimated.
- Fundraising was extremely difficult and money took a long time to be paid resulting in NWSADP using its own funds for an interim period.
- Local Pensions Service had targeted some of the locations in the past but commented that the Can You Claim It presence appeared to result in more interest and referrals to the Pensions Service.
- From some of the clients' cases it was apparent that they had gone sometimes years without their entitlements. The campaign should take credit for reaching individuals not previously aware of their rights and by definition the "hardest to reach".
- It was clear that individuals were not just in need of advice on take-up of benefits but a significant number required help and support with refusals and appeals against decisions.
- The number of families with disabled children helped through the campaign seemed disproportionately high.

Recommendations

- There is clearly a need for improved measures in benefit take-up. Partners need to establish whether to invest in the current provision or whether one-off campaigns should be run annually. There are advantages to both these approaches.
- Future campaigns could focus on geographical areas such as Sheerwater or should target specific groups such as in families with disabled children.
- The collection of follow-up data needs to be more sophisticated. For a week long campaign this was not appropriate but if take-up work is to be invested in then cross-organisation systems should be developed.

- There needs to be a system for measuring the non-benefit outcomes also in order to establish the extent of the “improving well-being”.
- The efforts gone into the branding of the campaign, including the large publicity boards produced by WBC, should be utilised in the future rather than reinventing the wheel each time. The non agency specific approach appears to have appealed to individuals who may have been put off if the publicity had been more corporate.

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