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## **New Big Lottery Project**

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## **C.A.S.S' latest venture – the Big Lottery Advice Scheme**

In October 2007 C.A.S.S. launched its' latest scheme – a housing/homelessness and benefits advice service for offenders and people at risk of offending – made possible by a Big Lottery Fund grant. To deliver our targeted and much needed new service the grant funded two full-time posts and C.A.S.S., in turn, recruited four Project Workers who work on the scheme on a part-time basis. Workers were carefully chosen and bring with them a wide and varied range of skills and experience.

- Rachel has a degree in community development and has previously worked on a local community regeneration project.

- Lucy, having previously worked for the Community Law Centre as a Case Worker/ Debt Specialist as well as for the Benefits Advice Service, has considerable experience in advisory work. She's also worked in temporary supported housing and has been involved in the provision of floating support services for offenders.

- Kara completed a degree in business property management in Sheffield in 2001. She remained there for two years during which time she ran a student accommodation complex. On moving back to Cumbria she worked in residential lettings and then as a Homelessness Officer for both Copeland and Allerdale Local Authorities before taking up her position on the Big Lottery Advice Scheme with C.A.S.S.. Kara feels strongly that it is essential that quality services such as this are available...

“Housing and homelessness have always been of great interest and importance to me and now, I finally feel that I'm able to offer local people the advice and support that they both need and deserve”.

- Kat has a degree in psychology and criminology and is currently working towards a masters in forensic psychology. Before coming to C.A.S.S. she worked in informal education with disadvantaged young women and previous to that spent some time working for the Probation Service.

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Our Project Workers, who started working on the scheme in early 2008, are strategically placed in our various Cumbrian offices ensuring that the advice service can be accessed in as many locations as possible across the county.

So, how is the service delivered on a day to day basis?

Generally Project Workers hold scheduled advice surgeries in local probation offices but because C.A.S.S. wants the service to be as flexible and responsive as possible, where appropriate, advice sessions may also be offered in other locations such as local hostels or in people's own homes.

As well as the face to face advisory work advice can also be sought through the 'advice point' on this web-site. The site, again made possible with funding from the Big Lottery Fund, is a particularly exciting new development in the overall service that C.A.S.S. delivers. As an organisation we're pleased that our existing and potential service users can now access general information and more specific advice through this means.

Within the scope of the Big Lottery Advice Scheme is the opportunity to develop and deliver a sub-service, which addresses the specific needs of females. As the service unfolds there will also be a drive towards linking into prisons, which can be a really good way of picking up problems and assisting people in addressing them before they escalate.

In accessing this new scheme, if required, service users can go on to make the easy transition into utilising additional C.A.S.S services. The scheme is a much valued tool in C.A.S.Ss. goal of increasing provision for some of the most marginalized members of our society. The organisation is thankful to the Big Lottery Fund for making it possible.