

# Turn2us News

Issue 03: Spring 2009

Registered Charity No. 1120672

## A helping hand to break down the barriers

**Advisers and intermediaries play a key role in helping people in financial need access the money available to them. With further job losses, this role is becoming even more critical.**

Yet a recent survey conducted by Turn2us, in partnership with Adviser magazine, highlights some of the barriers that these professionals face in their job. For example, nearly a third of respondents (32%) could not help everyone that approached them. Staff shortages (63%) and a perceived lack of help for people in financial need (42%) were the main reasons.

Time constraints were another barrier, with a quarter of advisers saying they don't have enough time with each client. Significantly, over half (52%) said they were not aware that charities give grants to individuals.

It's clear that advisers are finding it difficult to access the help that does exist for individuals. Many rely on multiple sources with a third (36%) relying on word of mouth when deciding which charities would be best for their clients to apply for.

We know there is certainly a great need and demand for the kind of service provided by Turn2us. Around three quarters (75%) of advisers and intermediaries agreed that a free online service with information on welfare benefits and charitable grants available from one place would allow them to help more people.

Turn2us's website - with its wide range of functions and benefits - enables advisers and intermediaries to contact charities, find out which charities are open to application and check applications online – all in a user friendly format.



**“Our client group is really varied from mental health to physical disability, older people and ex offenders – so to have everything in one place is a godsend.”** Intermediary

Meanwhile, Turn2us's pilot helpline - up and running for four months now – has received over 3,000 enquiries across the UK. Trained staff provide an independent, free and confidential service undertaking benefits and grants searches and signposting people to further help.

Given that most advisers and intermediaries (85%) expect to see a further increase in the number of people approaching them in financial difficulty over the coming months, we aim to work closely with them to ensure that we can support them in their work on income maximisation.

Turn2us looks forward to working together with you over the coming months.

**Jolanta Lasota** Chief Executive, Turn2us





## What's new at Turn2us

### It's a family affair

Turn2us has secured support from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) with Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) and Home-Start UK to help families with young children maximise their income. Currently, some four million children live in poverty in the UK – one of the highest rates in Europe.

The two-year pilot will target families in financial need, who often face isolation and difficulties in accessing services. This project will support them in accessing the benefits and charitable grants available to them, supported by their Home-Start volunteer.

The project will involve training Home-Start volunteers to deliver an information and support service to families in their homes.

Ikram Dahman, Head of Partnerships at Turn2us said, "Statistics show that families with young children are more likely to be in poverty. And children under five remain at greater risk of poverty than any other age group.

We are grateful for the support of DSCF and are pleased to be working with CPAG and Home-Start UK on this pilot. Too many families are missing out on support that could really make a difference to their lives."

**"It's such a relief to have discovered your site. It's given me hope about getting out of the awful financial situation I've been in and am still struggling with."** User

**Visit us:** [www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk)

### Shaping into Form

Turn2us has been working with the Confederation of British Service and Ex-Service Organisations (COBSEO) on Form A, the electronic database used by military charities. The project goes live this spring and aims to make it easier for individuals applying for support.

The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) and the Royal British Legion are two leading services charities who now use Turn2us's on-line service to assist individuals in need. Turn2us supports Form A by giving case workers access to a benefits checker, grants search and information to help individuals they are working with.

Turn2us is also ensuring that the existing grant enquiry application form complements those used by the military charities. The streamlined system will make it simpler for applicants to apply for help and means they don't have to provide information twice.

Jim Keeley, Project Manager for SSAFA says "Working together with Turn2us will help to provide a comprehensive and coordinated service to our clients to help satisfy their needs."



## Helpline update

**Since the launch of the pilot helpline last November, over 3,000 enquiries have so far been received across the UK – helping people in financial need access the money available to them.**

Trained staff provide an independent, free and confidential service undertaking benefits checks, grants searches and signposting people to further help. A significant number of those supported were helped to apply to an appropriate charity for support and all callers received information and/or a benefits and grants search.

The helpline is being piloted with individuals in South Wales, the North East and two inner London boroughs - in addition to intermediaries and charities from across the UK. The helpline provides a much needed source of support for people unable to use the Turn2us website.

Compass Partnership is currently evaluating the helpline over a nine month period, to assess the service, its delivery model and its impact on maximising people's income. Initial findings from the research shows that the vast majority (91%) of callers were satisfied with the service and 93% received the assistance they wanted.

The next part of the research will focus on the interim outcomes for people using the service – looking at the benefits claimed, grants applied for and how the helpline has supported individuals to take the next steps.

**"I didn't realise I could get help. I don't like asking for anything but if I don't, I've no idea what will happen. Now I may be able to afford to buy weekly food instead of paying out all I get then being left with less than five pounds to shop with. I may also be able to get help with household appliances. Thank you very much. You may have just saved me."** Pilot helpline user

**"Thanks to your site I am hopeful that we can get out of arrears with our fuel supplier."** User



**Email us:** [info@turn2us.org.uk](mailto:info@turn2us.org.uk)

# Mary's Story

**“I like the fact that you can talk about your situation to a real person on the helpline as well as using the resources on the website.”**



Mary, who recently celebrated her sixtieth birthday, is a retired teacher who has taught in a variety of schools. In 1996, she suffered a mental breakdown and subsequently lost her job when she was forced to take early retirement on health grounds. She then began to accrue significant debts.

Mary discovered Turn2us at the end of 2008, when she received a heating bill for £600 that she was unable to pay. She had applied to a couple of grant-giving charities, including one that she had received help from in the past, but was unsuccessful. One of these charities put her in touch with Turn2us.

Mary was able to secure two grants as a result of speaking to someone on the helpline and making an online application using the website. She received £100 from the College & University Support Network, which supports people working in adult, further or higher education and their dependants. She also received £500 from the Collier Charitable Trust, which supports retired Christian missionaries and teachers in the UK and overseas.

Getting the money to pay this bill meant I didn't have to worry about putting the heating on this winter," said Mary. "What I like about Turn2us's services is that they offer you a way of accessing information on a wide range of possible charities that might be able to help you. I also like the fact that you can talk about your situation to a real person on the helpline as well as using the resources on the website."

## Are you working with people who are experiencing money problems because of:

**redundancy, out of work, low income, retirement**

**bereavement, separation, mental health issues**

**disability, ill health, divorce, caring for someone**

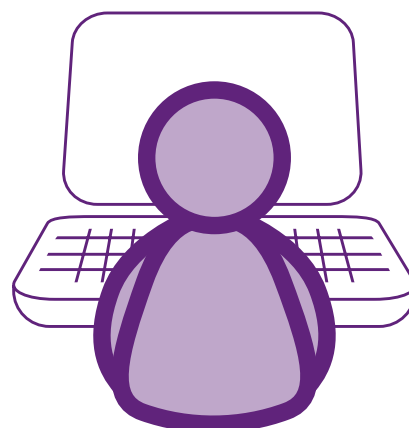
You can access comprehensive information and carry out a benefits check and grants search at [www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk). You can also set up an online account that will enable you to make multiple applications for grants. The Turn2us service is free and confidential.

To find out more:

**Call us:** 0808 802 2000

**Visit us:** [www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk)

**Email us:** [info@turn2us.org.uk](mailto:info@turn2us.org.uk)



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