

Zacchaeus 2000

Z2K News

Issue 1 Autumn 2009

justice for vulnerable debtors

Welcome to the first issue of our quarterly newsletter.

Z2K's mission is to:

- fight the causes of poverty and help the disadvantaged to access justice when they face claims for debt or fines
- act as McKenzie Friends (court-recognised non-legal supporters of people who are unrepresented)
- train volunteers to act as McKenzie Friends
- pursue test cases through the courts and lobby Parliament when the law or the benefits system are unfair

If you have anything to say about what we do, please contact us (details are at the end of this newsletter). We depend on our volunteers and we need your comments and ideas.

Joanna Kennedy, *Chief Executive*

Campaign with us to raise awareness and lobby MPs about crucial issues. Your support can make a real difference. Information about our current campaigns is on www.z2k.org

Campaign

Bailiffs' powers must be regulated

For the first time in some 400 years, new laws proposed that bailiffs should be given powers to use force to break into homes and to use force against debtors themselves.

Following lobbying by Z2K, Karen Buck MP (right) introduced a Bill to:



- repeal bailiffs' powers to break into homes to enforce fines under the Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act 2004
- repeal bailiffs' powers under the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2008 allowing forcible entry for all debts and permitting force against debtors. As a result of lobbying this extension of the powers has been shelved by the Government for the time being.
- seek powers for bailiffs to return obviously vulnerable cases to the courts or creditors for reconsideration of payment terms.

Karen Buck declared: 'The power of forcible entry into a person's home and the power for bailiffs even to use force against debtors are far too extreme to be given to civilian enforcement officers. The balance has been tilted too far against the householder's right to be secure from trespass into their home...

'The powers introduced by the Government in the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007 have not been brought into effect by regulation, and we await the regulations that will implement them. However, I believe that it is now clear that such powers should be repealed. Their excessive harshness should not be left on the statute book, even with an indication that the Government do not intend to implement them at present. The powers should be removed entirely.'

Winning cases:

here are some examples of Z2K's successes in the courts

Unfair TV licence fine repaid

An innocent elderly couple had been fined for not having a TV licence where they no longer lived. After four court hearings, Z2K got the £200 fine repaid, together with £65 costs and fees of £250 demanded by bailiffs.

Stressed single mother protected from bailiffs

A mother of five was suffering from stress because she was being threatened by bailiffs for unpaid council tax. The debt arose because of her understandable delay in claiming restored council tax benefit in a confused period after she had been out of her house following a fire. Z2K persuaded the council to withdraw the bailiffs and to accept monthly payments of £3.65 instead of the £250 up front demanded by the bailiffs.

Young care leaver saved from eviction

A young woman, virtually illiterate as a result of undiagnosed dyslexia and living on Jobseeker's Allowance of £50.95 per week, did not have full housing benefit to cover her rent and was unable to pay the shortfall. Z2K was asked to help by ATD Fourth World, which is training her in literacy and employment skills to help her fulfil her dream of becoming a nursery nurse. Z2K prevented her eviction for arrears and secured a review of her benefit.

Start your own McKenzie Friends group

After attending one of our McKenzie Friends training courses, Z2K volunteer John Loyd (centre left), a paralegal, set up his own group in



Colchester, Essex. Staff member Alan Murdie went to Colchester to train seven volunteers who are now on their way to helping vulnerable debtors in their area. If you want to be trained as a McKenzie Friend, or start your own training group, please contact us.

Fundraising

Sandi Toksvig hosts successful quiz night



Our first fundraising event, a quiz night in Inner Temple hosted by Sandi Toksvig (right), was great fun, with generously donated raffle and auction prizes. We hope to make it an annual event.

Thanks to our enthusiastic guests we raised nearly £30,000 to expand our work among vulnerable debtors. We plan to employ a lawyer/volunteer coordinator, who will enable us to serve more households throughout the UK as we recruit, manage and train volunteers to support vulnerable debtors facing court proceedings and claims.

Shop and search

Here are simple ways to help us to raise funds when you go online:

- Shop online: support us when you shop on Amazon at <http://astore.amazon.co.uk/wwwz2korg-21> or go to Everyclick.shop.com and select Zacchaeus 2000 Trust
- Search the web using www.everyclick.com/thezacchaeus2000trust
- Donate or set up a fundraising page at Justgiving.com or Everyclick.com

If you want to get clicking you may find it easier to read this newsletter online at www.z2k.org or receive it via e-mail (contact admin@z2k.org).

Z2K

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