

Zacchaeus 2000

Z2K News

Issue 4 Summer 2011

Justice for vulnerable debtors

Boost to volunteers

Since the last newsletter Henu Ali, our volunteer co-ordinator, has produced the gorgeous Aria. We missed Henu while she was on maternity leave, but Maev Sullivan, one of our Trustees, managed the volunteers brilliantly in Henu's absence. We had gained several very good new volunteers who needed to be introduced to our work. Many of them now work with us regularly, increasing the number of families we can help.

Profit share

We improved our finances with a very successful fundraising quiz night hosted once again by Sandi Toksvig, one of our wonderfully supportive patrons. It was at Inner Temple where teams of solicitors and barristers battled it out over one ferociously difficult round: album covers rendered in Lego. This year we organised the event jointly with the Bar Pro Bono Unit, who do great work in procuring free advice from barristers for those in need, and Z2K will be sharing the proceeds with them.



Hardwicke chambers won the Z2K quiz night prize (Sandi Toksvig is third from right)

A handwritten signature in red ink, which appears to read 'J.P.K.' followed by a stylized flourish.

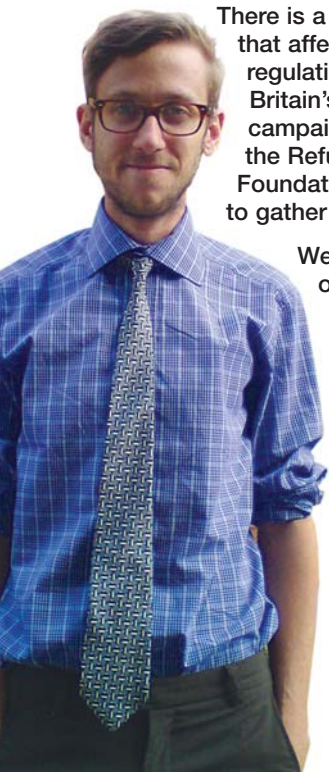
Joanna Kennedy
Chief Executive

Ben Jenkins Parliamentary researcher

In January I was appointed by Z2K to research solutions to the problems faced by those we help, to lobby parliamentarians to make positive change and to raise the profile of these issues in the media and with the public.

There is a pressing need to campaign on issues that affect our clients. Changes to legislation and regulations will harm the incomes and lives of Britain's poorest. I have worked in policy and campaigns at charities such as Citizens Advice, the Refugee Council and the Mental Health Foundation, and have been using this experience to gather evidence to submit to policy-makers.

We work with a number of other organisations to campaign on issues such as housing supply, benefit sanctions and regulating bailiffs. There is strong evidence that living in poverty affects health, likelihood to commit crime and educational achievement, making the imposition of poverty incomes a false economy. Unfortunately the Treasury does not recognise that savings can be made in many Whitehall departments if minimum incomes are increased. I am hopeful that Z2K's campaigning will help to reverse this serious error in government policy.



Energy Awareness Conference

On 25 January Z2K hosted an Energy Awareness Conference at the offices of City law firm Reynolds Porter Chamberlain LLP. The conference, which was a huge success, featured speakers from British Gas, Charis Grants, Consumer Focus, Ofgem and the Energy Ombudsman Service and was attended by more than 70 guests from the energy industry, the media and advice agencies.

Organised by Z2K's ex-intern and volunteer James Morris, the conference launched Z2K's latest initiative, which aims to bring advice agencies and the energy sector closer together for the benefit of vulnerable customers throughout the UK.

Chief Executive of Z2K, Joanna Kennedy, said: 'The Energy Awareness Conference was a big step towards ensuring that advice agencies have the knowledge to assist their vulnerable clients when energy issues arise. The important thing for us at Z2K now is to build on the relationships forged at the conference to present a united front to the energy industry, and to ensure it listens when we say "something must change".'

For more information on Z2K's new energy initiative please contact Lilian Lee, tel. 020 7259 0801, email Admin@z2k.org.

Three of Z2K's recent successes

A sanction imposed on an unemployed man for alleged non-attendance at a JobCentre when he was actually attending a DWP-approved course was overturned by Z2K. Harry Sayers found his benefit stopped for two weeks without warning (this occurred when The Guardian revealed that JobCentre Plus were sanctioning large numbers of claimants simply to meet targets). Z2K appealed and took the case to the MPs on the Committee on the Welfare Reform Bill 2011 and to the Minister for Employment. Three days later Harry was repaid. A complaint is now being lodged against JobCentre Plus.

A man who fell into rent arrears when he lost his job faced eviction from his council flat. A volunteer attended court with him but the district judge refused to let her speak as a McKenzie Friend and he was too frightened to speak for himself. The eviction order was made but postponed and our volunteer persuaded the landlord to suspend the eviction whilst the arrears were paid off by instalments, as he now has a new job. We saved his home at the last moment.

A single woman with severe epilepsy and a paralysed hand was judged fit to work so her Employment Support Allowance was cut off, leaving her without income for several weeks. We helped to overcome the obstacles put in her way by Jobcentre Plus and lodged a brief appeal containing no new information. This was swiftly granted, showing that the original decision which left her destitute should never have been made.

Our mission

We fight the causes of poverty and help people on benefit or low incomes to access justice when they face claims for debt or fines.

- **We act as McKenzie Friends (court-recognised non-legal supporters of people without representation)**
- **We train volunteers to act as McKenzie Friends**
- **We pursue test cases through the courts and lobby Parliament when the law, the legal process or the benefits system are unfair.**

Z2K McKenzie Friend wins benefit victory

Z2K volunteer John Lloyd has succeeded in a test case which has changed the way the DWP works out the savings limits for claiming benefits.

Since 1983, the DWP has looked only at accounts in credit and ignored overdrafts or debts when imposing the savings limits. John Lloyd argued that this was wrong. Supported by Alan Murdie, Z2K Director of McKenzie Friends, his case was heard at the Upper Tribunal in London. Judgment was given in John's favour in February.

As a result, the DWP will have to change the way it assesses capital, unless it appeals or the Government intervenes; local authorities will also have to follow suit when calculating council tax and housing benefit. The decision will help those with savings near the capital limits for benefits, including many pensioners and those recently made redundant who have existing debts.

Alan Murdie stated: 'This demonstrates that a determined claimant, given the right McKenzie Friend support and backing, can change the law.'

Shop and search

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

- **Shop online:**
at www.easyfundraising.org.uk/z2k - you can access major retailers such as Amazon and eBay and when you make a purchase through this site we receive a cashback donation.
- **Search the web**
at <http://z2k.easysearch.org.uk>
- **Renew your insurance**
at www.donatesomeback.com/charity/zacchaeus
- **Donate**
or set up a fundraising page at www.Justgiving.com or www.Everyclick.com/z2k

If you want to get clicking you may find it easier to read this newsletter online and subscribe to future issues at www.z2k.org/newsletter/subscribe

Z2K

34 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0DH

Tel: 020 7259 0801 Fax: 020 7259 0701

E-mail: Admin@z2k.org

www.z2k.org

Registered Charity No. 1110841

The Zacchaeus 2000 Trust is a company limited by guarantee registered in England no. 05442501 with registered office 4th floor, 2-4 Great Eastern Street, London EC2A 3NT

July 2011

