

## **Concluding Report of the Northern Link Area Outreach Services Task and Finish Group: Annex D - Notes from Ockment Centre visit**

Cllr Yelland and I visited the Ockment Centre today (16th Nov) and met with Dil Lord and Richard Easthope. We took the opportunity to also meet with CAB. The CVS office was not manned.

Notes were:

Since the St James Office closed, the Ockment Centre office has been manned two days a week (Wed & Fri) with the exception of a month in the summer when it was judged that the footfall only merited one day a week.

The current footfall is 'around 3 per day'. It has fallen considerably now that the 'second recycling bin' initiative is no longer a cause of visits. One other factor for the reduction is that where people have difficulty visiting Okehampton, the Locality team, being mobile, is able to conduct 'home visits' to resolve issues.

The CAB saw the change as negative. Previously they could refer some CAB callers to the St James Street WDBC team who would then access specialist staff within WD to resolve issues such as homelessness. Now, this involves the CAB making the call and this, they claim, often results in the call going unanswered and delay in sorting out issues. We concluded that this was more an issue of the processes within WD than a function of the manning of the WD Okehampton office.

The Ockment Centre is not well 'signposted' (in fact there are no physical signs at all externally or internally) whereas the St James Street Centre was well established and therefore well known. The reception staff at the Ockment Centre do their best to help 'guide' people. Given that the WD office is only manned two days each week, visitors to the Centre looking to access WD support inevitable end up at the CAB door. We asked if there was data to assess the change on the CAB but there wasn't and the view was therefore anecdotal. (While not a matter for this review, it was considered that a separate action to look at how the CAB access WD Officers may be worthwhile).