**Thurrock Mental Health Service User & Carer Forum
12th May 2014, 2.00pm – 4.00pm
The Main Hall, The Beehive**

1. **Welcome & Introductions**

Attendees: David Rundell (Mind), Jeanette Lambert (Mind), Toni Saliba (Mind), Abigail Franks ( Mind), Harpal Siphkap, Stuart Rouse (Mind), Ambrose Campbell (Mind), M H Edward (Mind), D Sparkes (Mind), Susie Nankivell (Together), Sheila Auger (Carer), Anthony Auger (Service User), Marie Budge (CARIADS).

There were introductions from everyone.

1. **Minutes & Matters arising from the previous Forum Meeting**

Toni asked if in the next forum minutes any abbreviations of words come also be in full.

1. **Feedback from Bill Clayton about the Mental Health First Aid training.**

Bill has researched the Mental-Health-First-Aid training and found it to be a great idea. The trainer also seemed good value. Bill did share this information internally and found that work is already in progress via the Council’s public health team.

 ACAS will be running the training, which is funded by Public Health England, and the Council will be adding this to their corporate programme for managers over the next few months. The target audience will be all people, managers and Human Resources advisors.

Bill has shared the information he has and the idea about getting this “qualification” out to a wider audience across services, particularly with staff who engage directly with the public. The plan, at the moment, is to implement the ACAS training then take a view after that. That programme should finish in September. Bill will keep the Forum updated on progress.

1. **Short presentation from Christine Ludlow, World of Work (WoW) Co-ordinator, Thurrock Centre for Independent Living (TCIL)**

The Thurrock Centre for Independent Living (TCIL) WoW and Job Collective projects aim to build awareness of disabled people and people with mental health conditions (regardless of specific impairments) and to support people to become “work ready”, taking into account the need for flexibility and fluctuating conditions. Christine offers holistic 1 to 1 support to individuals through a 5 Stage process, increasing skills and confidence, c.v. writing, group work and peer support and offering brokerage, resulting in work placements, work experience, voluntary work

1. **Break out groups to assign questions on employment, skills, opportunities for Mental Health Service Users.**
2. **Question & Answer Session with Christine Ludlow (TCIL) and Andrew Newcombe (Grays JCP)**

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| **Question** | **Answer** |
| What work is being done around increasing awareness and more understanding of Employers around Mental Health issues and in creating a positive atmosphere?  | Employers are less hard-nosed than previously, there is increased flexibility to make adjustments for people (particularly now in relation to Access To Work. |
| Should people have to disclose any Mental Health issues/conditions?  | It is the person’s choice whether or not to disclose. But Equality legislation protects individuals from less favourable treatment if they do disclose, right from the point of making a job application and then through the whole course of employment.An Employer cannot make reasonable adjustments if they are not aware of any impairment or condition  |
| What types of reasonable adjustments are available? | Employer are subject to the duty to make reasonable adjustments if they know or could reasonably be expected to know that someone who works for them has a disability and is placed at a substantial disadvantage (in comparison to other employees) as a result. So it is important that if Employers think that an employee needs reasonable adjustments that they discuss this with them. Creating an open and supportive work environment will help everyone identify and address any disadvantages which a disabled employee faces. Regular 1:1 discussions with staff are likely to be helpful in doing this. Not everyone with a disability will require a reasonable adjustment and it is important not to make assumptions. It is the Employer who pays for the reasonable adjustment.Examples of reasonable adjustments include:Being flexible and creative is important when considering solutions. Below are examples which could act as prompts for line managers and employees exploring these issues together.Working hours or patterns- Take a flexible approach to start/finish times and/or shift patterns- Allow use of paid or unpaid leave for medical appointments- Phase the return to work, e.g. offering temporary part-time hours- Equal amount of break time, but in shorter, more frequent chunks- Allow someone to arrange their annual leave so that is spaced regularly throughout theyear- Allow the possibility to work from home at times- Temporary reallocation of some tasksPhysical environment- Minimise noise – e.g. providing private office/room dividers/partitions, reducing pitch orvolume of telephone ring tones- Provide a quiet space for breaks away from the main workspace- Offer a reserved parking space- Allow for increased personal space- Move workstation – to ensure for example that someone does not have their back to thedoor.Support with workload- Increase frequency of supervision- Support someone to prioritise their work- Allow the individual to focus on a specific piece of work- Consider job sharingSupport from others- Provide a job coach- Provide a buddy or mentor- Provide mediation if there are difficulties between colleagues- The list is illustrative only and is not exhaustive |
| What types of training and education and qualifications are available  | This will depend upon the job and the employer. It is possible to undertake an apprenticeship and gain a qualification (often an NVQ after 12 months) whilst working. |
| What support is available with C.V. drafting (how to word it correctly) & developing I.T. skills and the choices of the type of work individuals would like to do? | Interview skills are available through the Job Centre and through the TCIL WoW project, particularly around C.V. building.JCP now offers “Claimant Commitments” – looking at what each individual wants their work plan to be and how to get the most from it, it is bespoke to the individual. |
| There are gaps on my C.V. due to my conditions, how can I minimise the effect this might have on my Job Search? | There are JCP employer advisers – who will have conversations with you and potential employers and “match” you to the right type of job. The advisers can help you look at different pathways to work – For example M&S and other places, to take the first step. So you will be able to gain skills and say “I can because I have” – in terms of building experience.It is also possible to deal positively with gaps on a person’s C.V. Recent voluntary work will likely be looked at more favourably than work you did 5-10 years ago.Employers are now looking for people with the potential to work for them – Employees can be trained on the job and given the right skills, so you don’t necessarily need to already have the skills/qualifications for the job.Employers will look at Peoples values, things like time keeping, enthusiasm, they can train you later (on the job) There is a variety of employers and pragmatic local businesses in the borough, especially in areas like retail, admin and care skills.  |
| How can I get help with being more “work ready” and knowing which benefit to be on?  | Third Sector Organisations, like DIAL, TCIL, the CAB and Mind can help with this advice and work closely with the Job Centre to provide the right, most up to date information. Everyone is different, and will be assisted as an individual. Entitlement to various benefits is dependent upon specific individual circumstances.There is a Financial Inclusion Officer at the Council who can also offer support around income maximisation. |
| How do I know which is the best benefit to be on?  | This will depend upon your individual circumstances. It is a complex area, but the JCP Disability Employment Advisers and Voluntary Organisations like DIAL, the CAB and TCIL will be able to support you and to explain |
| Would the benefit I am on change if I was just looking for work? | There is nothing to stop you dropping into the Job Centre or using other means (e.g. the Internet) to start looking for work) |
| What volunteering is allowed and what isn’t?  | This relates to something called “Permitted Work” and it depends which benefit you’re on (ESA, JSA), and which group you’re in. The best thing to do is talk to the Voluntary Organisation and to the Disability Employment Advisers before you start volunteering. |
| Individuals have experienced issues with being unable to access the information/help they need from front line staff at the JCP Grays. Particularly concerns with the manner of security staff. | The frontline JCP staff are direct employees. The security staff are employed by a private third party. If there are any issues with either JCP staff or the security staff, please make a complaint and this will be taken seriously, investigated and necessary changes and retraining can take place. |
| Is there someone on the front- line (first person a customer speaks to) at the job centre who can recognise vulnerable people? And take appropriate action? If they need support? And can discuss difficulties, for example with completing forms?  | All staff are trained in terms of dignity and respect, and about recognising the need for specific adjustments to be made. There is a type of “Triage” system that operates in JCP Grays. |
| How will Universal Credit affect people if they have fluctuating conditions and their conditions change? | The Universal Credit system deals with a change of circumstances differently compared to the current system. A change of circumstances may result in a change in the amount payable but individuals will not have to stop a current claim and start a new claim every time (so there won’t be a “cliff edge” and this will avoid the bureaucracy of starting a new claim). |

1. **AOB**

Any other questions Ian will put them in the minutes / e-mail Ian. For any WOW issues/questions, speak to Chris. Suzie would like the questions to be sent to Andrew.

1. **Date of the next forum meeting**
14th July 1:30pm arrive, 2:00pm start – 4:00pm (Housing/Allocations)