

Yorkshire and Humber Employment and Learning Skills Service User/ Carer Reference Group

Leeds, 7 September 2009

Present

Sue Rees, MAGIC, Harrogate
Andy Bottomley, Wakefield
Steve Ellement, Calderdale
Brinley Price, York and District Mind
Daniel Brittan, York Mind
Jen Clayton, York Faces
Stephanie de la Haye, Sheffield
Nev Wheeler, Sheffield – Chair
Terry Simpson, Leeds
Alayne Holmes, Carers Leeds
Ian Fulton, Craven LINK

In attendance

Patrick Wood, Voluntary Action Sheffield – Notes
Simon Francis, Programme Lead, Mental Health and Employment, YHIP
Steve Ward, Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Yorkshire and Humber
Tricia Clark, LSC – NIACE (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education)

Apologies

Sally Seymour
Lindsay Gillies
Charlotte Hind
Andi Whitehouse
Dave Shine
Ron Sweeney
Jackie Lubbock
Graham Estop
Helen Gibson, Government Office Yorks and the Humber
Ian Hastings, Jobcentre Plus
Helen Thomson, Yorkshire Forward

Notes of the last meeting

p.7 – Opportunities to participate in regional meetings. Simon has been off work for most of the summer. There is a meeting re: PSA16 on Thursday 10 September; Simon has been in contact with Government Office re: the need for service user representation and is awaiting a response.

Simon has funding to pay someone for ½ day or 1 day a week to work on a horizon scan, which would identify issues, projects and meetings that would be of interest to this group and YHIP generally. The scan would inform the production of a brief outline of work related to mental health and employment, which would be circulated to relevant stakeholders. The person undertaking this work would also be asked to produce a five minute verbal report at ELS Reference Group meetings. Simon will look to recruit someone from this group. Simon and Patrick will meet to develop a role description. The role would be based wherever the person recruited is (home or office base) and the position could be tailored to fit in with permitted earnings regulations if this is required. The group endorsed Simon's proposal.

Update from Simon Francis

Simon has chatted with Andi re: Andi's proposal as discussed at the last meeting. The ball is now in Andi's court. YHIP has limited capacity to support this kind of initiative.

Simon outlined the following initiatives/activities:

- A booklet on Direct Payments is being developed. 5,000 copies will be distributed throughout the region.
- 10,000 leaflets on mental health and redundancy have been distributed to GP surgeries
- 3 job retention courses have been delivered and training has been provided to Trade Unions
- An academic network has been set up – people from the Reference Group with an interest in research are invited to become involved
- A practitioners network event is scheduled for 23 September; this event is fully booked but you can contact Simon if you really want to go
- Mark Powell has been working on the theme of enterprise and self-employment; a funding bid to develop this work will be submitted to Yorkshire Forward
- YHIP has commissioned Eskimo Soup to develop a website for employers
- There is a possibility of supporting members of the Reference Group to access training to maximise participation in a range of user involvement activities

Simon mentioned the following national strategies, the first three of which were outlined at the Reference Group meeting in York:

- The National Strategy for Mental Health and Employment
- New Horizons – elements relating to inclusion and recovery are particularly relevant to the Reference Group
- DWP: Rachel Perkins will be looking at DWP systems and reporting to the Secretary of State
- Work, Recovery and Inclusion – this is the delivery strategy related to the Mental Health and Employment Plan; it's likely that the independent placement and support model will be recommended for uptake

Update from other agencies

LSC

As the LSC will cease to exist at the end of March, there has been a focus on moving into the shadow organisations that will eventually replace it. There has been ongoing discussion with local authorities and the Skills Funding Agency.

NIACE

Tricia outlined her work on the NIACE programme re: learning and skills and mental health. The programme has been running for 5 years and focuses on building the capacity of organisations to meet the needs of learners. There is some uncertainty re: funding when the LSC ceases to exist. The programme runs a network for practitioners, learners and service users to look holistically at supporting people into learning and through the learning process. Work this year has involved producing a toolkit to train teachers, lecturers and tutors in mental health awareness and positive support strategies. Hopefully, a document relating to this project will be distributed in February 2010.

Comments from group members

Ian stressed the need to look at work and employment in a wider sense than the DWP definitions.

Sue pointed out that some service users missed out on a basic education because of their mental health difficulties. Tricia mentioned that Skills for Life (basic skills) programmes are available in all colleges, although they are not mental health specific.

Advance directives for individuals in education

This idea was discussed in two groups. Feedback from the groups follows:

Group 1

The documents circulated by Patrick provided useful background information on advance directives but the wording and approach would have to be very different and more conversational. Although school leavers were identified as a particular risk group, the directive should be aimed at everyone in continuing education. Interested members of the Reference Group could communicate by email to develop this initiative.

Simon identified the following action points:

- Write to Deborah Persaud at BIS and relevant people at NIACE and the LSC, summarising our discussion so far
- Pay someone to develop a general information leaflet for the education system – Tricia to help put together a quality assurance group to ensure the wording is correct.
- Targeting the directive at everyone would be an important anti-stigma move

Tricia stressed the importance of thinking of and offering as many opportunities as possible to enable people to achieve what they want in the

context of employment and learning – the directive should be seen in this light.

Group 2

It's important to consider what the document should be called – 'advance directive' already has a strong meaning in mental health circles. It should be a simple document, perhaps one side A4, and contain a clear, simple statement about its purpose. It would be applicable to people with learning difficulties, Asperger Syndrome etc as well as people with mental health problems. Production of the document would be triggered if people indicated special circumstances. The process should be voluntary.

Simon stressed the importance of establishing a route to get the document out. It might be a good idea for students to produce them about a month after they have started their courses

Tricia suggested producing a form and/or leaflet that colleges and universities take on for themselves, something that could be personalised by different institutions and used with existing systems (e.g. induction, pastoral and personal tutor systems). Perhaps the form/leaflet could appear as a link in NIACE resources.

Group response to New Horizons

In two groups, we responded to the 12 consultation questions on p.124 to p.126 of the consultation document. Group 1 addressed questions 1 to 6 and Group 2 addressed questions 7 to 12.

Patrick will summarise the discussion on the day and invite further comments from Reference Group members before submitting a group response, which will include details of who we are, what we do and how this response was formulated.

Any other business

The Care Quality Commission on Mental Health will be staging a Third Sector event re: New Horizons at the West Yorkshire Playhouse in Leeds on Wednesday 9 September.

Patrick was asked to contact Heather Raistrick from the regional health authority re: sending details of another New Horizons event for circulation to Reference Group members, to ensure that Experts by Experience attend.

Date and venue of next meeting

Tuesday 8 December, 1.30 (lunch) – 5.00, The Circle, 33 Rockingham Lane, Sheffield.