

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

Sheffield, 8 December 2009

Present

Sue Rees, MAGIC, Harrogate
Andy Bottomley, Wakefield
Steve Ellement, Calderdale
Stephanie de la Haye, Sheffield
Nev Wheeler, Sheffield – Chair
Terry Simpson, Leeds
Ron Sweeney, Ilkley
Anita Wilson, Rotherham
Diana Swanson, Rotherham
Lindsay Gillies, INVOLVE, Doncaster
Jackie Lubbock, Sheffield
Alan Aoslin, Leeds

In attendance

Patrick Wood, Voluntary Action Sheffield – Notes
Simon Francis, Programme Lead, Mental Health and Employment, YHIP
Caroline Bamford, Regional Mental Health and Employment Co-ordinator,
YHIP

Apologies

Graham Estop
Alayne Holmes
Daniel Brittan
Steven Purdy
Rob Webster
Ian Fulton
Tricia Clark, LSC/NIACE

Notes of the last meeting

p.3 – Simon explained that ‘BIS’ stands for the Department of Business
Innovation and Skills.

Update from Simon Francis

Simon reported that much of his time since the last meeting had been spent
working on ‘Work, Recovery and Inclusion’, which is a document that outlines
a national cross departmental strategy relating to mental health and
employment. The document focuses on equipping service users with skills,
supporting people to get a job and providing support to enable people to keep

their jobs. It recognises the contribution that services users can and do make in these areas. The document was published/launched the day before this meeting. Simon will distribute hard copies/PDF of the report through Patrick.

Rachel Perkins has recently produced 'The Perkins Review', which relates to mental health, DWP systems and employment. 'Work, Recovery and Inclusion' responds to the recommendations in Rachel's report.

New Horizons was also launched the day before the meeting and the Government has also launched 'Working Our Way to Better Mental Health', which is a national strategy/framework.

There is some overlap in these papers. Simon believes that taken as a whole they indicate a step change towards 'normalising' mental health.

It would be a good idea to formulate group responses to these documents and to decide how we do this as a group.

Regionally, an agreement with the Strategic Health Authority will result in localities being able to bid toward a £1.2 million fund relating to mental health and employment. Service users and carers should be an integral part of this process. There is a meeting to discuss this programme on 16 December and Ron Sweeney will attend as a representative of this group.

Government Office Yorkshire and Humber and other agencies have agreed that there should be Reference Group representation at PSA16 meetings – group members should indicate their interest in this opportunity to Patrick in the first instance, who will then contact Simon.

Line manager training has been delivered to 600 people in the region and job retention training has been delivered to 200 people in the region.

There is an opportunity to bid for European money for project work, which might result in a PSA16 conference.

A bid to enable service user/carer groups to access seed funding has been submitted in relation to the European Year of Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010.

Update from other agencies

Simon has contacted plenty of people from a wide variety of agencies about this group but with the exception of LSC/NIACE their level of engagement has been disappointing.

Carers now have access to Jobcentre Plus – Caroline has a presentation about this initiative, which she will send to Patrick for circulation to group members.

A new initiative will see Mental Health Co-ordinators based in Job Centres to support people with mental health problems.

It was agreed that we should write to the regional director of Jobcentre Plus, outlining the purpose of the Reference Group, and inviting someone to attend the next meeting to outline recent developments within Jobcentre Plus. This invitation could be extended to the Mental Health Co-ordinators mentioned above.

Advance Agreement for Learners in Post-16 Education

The material from the Advance Agreement subgroup circulated by Patrick was discussed in two small groups. Following discussion and feedback, it was agreed to circulate Reference Group members to finally determine whether the document should be for everyone or for people with mental health needs. After arriving at a definitive answer to this question, it was agreed to send the final version of the document with a covering letter explaining when it might be used to Tricia Clark at NIACE, asking for her comments and advice.

Anita will ask for comments on the draft agreement from her contacts at Sheffield Hallam University and the University of Central Lancashire.

New Horizons

Patrick was thanked for co-ordinating the group response to New Horizons. Simon reported that there had been a very positive response to this in the region. Simon explained that Individual Placement and Support (p.2 of the response) is the best evidenced model for getting people back into employment.

Reference Group members attended New Horizons events in Leeds, including an event at the West Yorkshire Playhouse aimed at people from the voluntary and community sector, which highlighted a large number of individual service user responses.

Rural issues

Sue and Simon reported on a PSA16 related initiative in the region aimed at determining if there are any specific issues re: training and employment in the Dales, North Yorkshire, East Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and North Lincolnshire. This project is currently at the planning stage. It is likely to involve going to one locality in each of the areas listed to talk about the issues with key decision makers, such as commissioners, businesses, local authorities, PCTs and service user groups. It might result in a report with recommendations.

Ron suggested that we should be aware that there are rural communities in areas that are considered to be urban (e.g. West Yorkshire).

Issues relating to employers

Lindsay reported on the 'Better Workplace, Better Mental Health' event that was recently held in Doncaster. The event was held to publicise the development of a toolkit for helping people with mild to moderate mental health problems to get into work and stay in work. There were presentations from the Condition Management Programme (CMP) and Improving Access to

Psychological Therapies (IAPT). A GP raised the issue of the difficulties of assessing whether or not people are ready to return to work, which introduced a discussion about fit notes instead of sick notes. A speaker from the Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health highlighted the positive effect of work on mental health and reported that 80% of employers underestimate the impact of mental health problems as a reason for being off work.

Lindsay contacted the event organiser by email to enquire about service user consultation undertaken by the various initiatives that were mentioned at the event. Darren Bickerstaffe reported on meaningful user involvement within the CMP and Lindsay received feedback that there was user involvement within IAPT and some consultation re: a buddying scheme with INVOLVE (although INVOLVE was not aware of this). Overall, the response to Lindsay's enquiry was disappointing.

Simon said it would be useful to capture the principles of user involvement as illustrated by the questions that Lindsay put to the event organiser.

Simon mentioned that YHIP has developed a website for employers.

Lindsay also attended a service user conference in Manchester that addressed the issue of tokenism in relation to service user consultation (e.g. the views of 3 or 4 people being enshrined as the user view).

It was agreed to have a discussion about building capacity for service users and carers to make an active contribution to consultations and other user involvement initiatives at the next Reference Group meeting.

Terry pointed out that the field of user involvement is a growth area for service user employment and suggested that it would be a good idea to identify best practice in this area.

Horizon Scanner

Lindsay and Terry will liaise to identify consultations, news, events, funding opportunities and policy in relation to employment and learning skills and mental health. This should help the Reference Group to be more proactive. They aim to produce monthly bulletins, the first of which is planned for the end of January 2010. They also intend to produce a jargon buster to provide user friendly definitions of key terms. Reference Group members were invited to contact Lindsay and Terry with relevant information. Lindsay's email address is lindsayjoygillies@hotmail.com and Terry's is tezbeulah@phonecoop.coop.

Any other business

Simon and Caroline will press for funding from YHIP for the Reference Group to continue next year but the organisation's funding priorities have yet to be decided. Patrick will contact Simon re: funding if nothing has been heard by mid-January 2010.

Steph will be visiting New Zealand as a guest of the Ministry of Health and has offered to make a presentation based on her experience at the next Reference Group meeting.

Patrick circulated details of a free LSC conference to be held in Sheffield in February, which will focus on the LSC's mental health policy.

Caroline mentioned the regional Mental Health Practitioners Network meeting, which will be held in Sheffield on 22 January. The network consists of people who are involved in supporting people and organisations re: mental health issues. Caroline will send the programme of the meeting to Patrick for distribution to Reference Group members.

Simon reminded group members that expenses are available to cover Reference Group members' costs if they want to attend these or any other relevant events.

Date and venue of next meeting

Friday 5 March 2010, 12.30 – 4.00, York CVS, Priory Street Centre.