

**Camden Carers' Voice meeting
Minutes – 4 April 2019, 5.30-7.30pm
Charlie Ratchford Centre, Belmont Street NW1 8HF**

Attendance: (Steering Group) Jacky (chair) Kate (vice chair), Jessica, Janet, Sue, Costas, Galatea, Terry and Shahram. 30 carers. Allegra Lynch, Jill Pay, Naomi Feather, Philippa Russell - CCS, Christina Serrao – MSK, 3 x trustees **Apologies:** 2 carers, **Speakers:** Sharon Hammond, Sigal Foster – Working For Carers

Jacky welcomed everyone to the meeting and drew attention to the Ground Rules. **Minutes of last meeting** – Updated information about support and advice around benefits is available or it can be emailed. Cllr Kelly encouraged carers to make deputations where relevant. The Steering Group is following up with this.

A carer noted it is important to thank Karen Timperley for her involvement and support in setting up CCV. All agreed this should be recorded.

Sharon Hammond, Project Manager and Sigal Foster, Senior Employment Advisor - Working for Carers Project.

- It is funded by Big Lottery Fund & European Social Fund with 4 lead partners including Carers Trust and Camden Carers Service. There are 4 hubs in Greater London. Camden is in a group with South West of London including Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea and others. The South East Hub includes Islington, Lambeth and Lewisham among others. Barnet and Brent and others are the north west hub. The north east hub includes Hackney, Redbridge and others.
- They have funding for a further 3 years. It has run for over 2.5 years with frontline delivery to unwaged carers from all boroughs finding employment. The process is individualised. A carer is referred to Working for Carers, fills out registration forms. The project can even help apply for IDs such as a passport to enable someone to register. They meet to discuss hopes / caring role / ideas about a job or training.
- Carers may not be ready to work but want to discuss options like business start-up, voluntary work. There is a budget to help eg training or interview clothes, travel expenses to support a carer move towards the labour market. They use job brokerage through Camden Council to help Camden residents with adult education.
- Universal Credit (UC) they refer carers for welfare advice so they are aware of the impact on benefits. They can work 16 hours per week but there are complications. **ACTION:** Sharon urged carers to report any issues around UC as they feed them back to DWP. For issues around working during term time and not being paid during holidays, a carer suggested payments are split into 12 months to cover holiday time.
- IT skills – Learn My Way is a free service that teaches IT skills at own pace and covers lots of skills around public services, social media

Questions & Answers:

- Trusting staff with your personal information? There is a confidentiality document between carer and staff. They take great care with documents and never travel with personal information.
- Number of referrals? Carers may only need support for letter writing / CV and others may have more intense support. There is no waiting list - carers are

- responded to immediately. Process can take from 2 weeks if the carer is motivated.
- Links to Job Centre are not very close but if someone is on JSA, they should explain they are on Working for Carers. They have presented to JCP about the project.
 - Direct payments and carer allowance where the software does not record carers returning to work and they may lose benefits, or UC where their hours of care are not taken into account and carers called for intensive job search in JCP. CCS is telling DWP about issues with the computer program. One carer suggested public shaming is the best route – expose DWP inadequacies on twitter **ACTION** – CCV set up a twitter account. Also alert MP's like Keir and Tulip
 - Positive outcomes – Sharon circulated documents with stories of carers. They have supported over 40 people into paid employment and 22 into training. 85% of engaged carers have had successful outcomes.
 - They work with employers around Carers Rights to help a carer advocate for themselves and negotiate with the employer eg home working. There is a gap around job retention and some leave jobs as they cannot negotiate with employer. 600 people a day leave jobs due to caring responsibilities – Working for Carers want to bridge that gap.
 - Someone with a disability using Access to Work? They would help if they are a carer over 25. Would be good to expand Access to Work to cover adjustments for carers.
 - Carers with children? They encourage them to look at jobs with suitable hours
- Sharon and Sigal were thanked for their interesting talk and discussion.

Philip Darby had to leave. Allegra noted the new Carers' Centre is likely to be ready by September 2020. Allegra is trying to ensure it has 4 x small rooms for consultations. She will email Danny Beales and Pat Callaghan. The chair invited carers to note any burning issues to be covered by CCV. Suggestions:

- Work on twitter campaign
- Benefits and UC – issues around decreased hours due to caring role affecting housing benefit. Gap in time to receive money which increases debts and stress.
- Issues around new digital systems eg UCLA which creates delays.
- Less than 8% of carers recognise that they are carers. Highlight issues with GP practices and provision for carers to make double appointments. Invite Frances Hassler from HealthWatch – survey practices to see what adjustments are made for carers. Also noted to know reception staff and talk to the Practice manager
- Being an appointee - CCS Support Worker to follow up with letter to support carer
- Carer's Passports – will come in soon eg employers to recognise the carer role.
- NHS Improvement and NHS Think Carer with GP framework around supporting and identifying carers.
- Ask Carers Trust to do a session around Best Practice –look at creating a standard
- Welfare benefits – a carer had a terrible experience with DWP – cancelled appointments, inadequate information and communication. Who do you go to for complaints

Any other business

Question of timing meetings – those present all agreed an evening meeting works well.