

Workers' Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday 15th January 2020

Present: Salim, Farrukh, Rosie, Catherine, Kalpna, Vikki, Jan, Jerome, Penny, Jamie, Ruth, Michael (S), Christine, Judith, Patsy, Lesley, Roy

Welcome and introductions

Everyone was welcomed to the meeting by Catherine (ASM). Introductions were done, with everyone being asked to introduce the person to their right.

Chief Officer Update

Salim reported that the Board strategy day was to be held the following day, which would focus on what we do, how we do it and on the next three years. The Board would be considering whether there were different ways of delivering what we do.

Funding levels and reserves were in a much better situation than they had been so any ideas on what was needed should be communicated via Mike S.

The focus for the last quarter of the year would be on seeking extensions to existing projects, including UC, Scams, EDBX and Disability Benefits. The Bureau would be tendering for Crisis Intervention project funding.

WBC had not yet agreed that we could move into some of the space vacated by Age UK.

Salim asked if everyone could type their expenses claims rather than handwrite them.

Training & Recruitment Update from Rosie

- Rosie thanked everyone for accepting invitations to training – there were a lot of these at present.
- She was very proud of the training offered, including a forthcoming 2 day debt advice training course. She reminded anyone booked onto training to speak ASAP to supervisors if they needed to take time off their usual rota sessions.
- There were 2 more ASK training dates available.

- Rosie was co-ordinating training for the Herts Cluster Group and there would be a number of courses available.
- There were 6 new Gateway assessors currently being trained.
- Jerome had qualified as a Consumer advisor – Rosie congratulated him on this and thanked him for the training he was giving Lorena and Andrea. Malcolm and Sue had completed their advisor training and Dina, Anna, Helen and Peter had completed their GW training.

Health & Safety reminders

The heating was now back on but could not be controlled from the boiler – the only way to reduce the heat was on individual radiators and by opening windows. If windows were opened, workers were reminded to shut and lock them when leaving the room after their rota session.

Presentation on Modern Slavery by Judith

Judith delivered a presentation on modern slavery following a workshop she had recently attended. Leaflets and posters had been made available within the Bureau and she urged everyone to be aware of possible signs of modern slavery eg client's being afraid or in an unexplained rush; very low pay when doing a QBC. There was a national referral mechanism accessed through the police or a national helpline (details on leaflets). Clients in the UK illegally needed to be made aware that reporting slavery could cause a problem in relation to their immigration status.

Bureau Update from Catherine

- Catherine noted that voting for the BID awards for customer service closed on Friday.
- The Bureau was moving towards being as paperless as possible. Paperwork should be scanned and attached rather than copied – some documents would be needed in paper form eg MAPs, and appeal bundles but should be shredded (ie MAP once on MART) or returned to client (bundles) when no longer needed. Decisions on paper copies would be made by Catherine on a case by case basis. It was important to name scanned documents clearly and

to scan documents separately so they could be easily found once attached to casebook.

- There was lots of archiving to do in the Purple room – anyone who had any free time to help would be very welcome.
- We were behind targets for Energy Advice appointments - Catherine reminded everyone that most of our clients fit the criteria for these.
- Catherine noted we were achieving excellent outcomes and thanked everyone for their contribution on this. She was keeping a “success diary” for case studies for eg funding applications and social media.
- Catherine would be attending the BME Network meeting on 28th January.

Presentation by Angela Roberts, Partnership manager at Luton Job Centre

Key points:

The stages in a UC claim dealt with at the Job Centre include arranging home visits for claimants who need them; meetings with work coaches; ID verification interviews; and Right to Reside interviews.

Claimants can be provided with training opportunities via their work coach, including eg English language classes if low English levels are a barrier to work and employability skills.

There is a “Find a job” electronic search system.

Best means of contact is generally via the journal, telephone if necessary.

Work coaches cannot see “drop-ins” but the Front of House team (NOT security guards) should see drop ins to determine needs/vulnerability.

CAB should only phone about very vulnerable clients or in exceptional cases.

Claimants must keep their Personal Security Number (16 digits) given at the ID interview safe. If it is lost they will need to come to JC to speak to Front of House

team with 3x ID.

There will be no more new Post Office card payment arrangements from February and these will be phased out by 2021.

Migration to UC will last until 2023.

Next workers' meeting: Thursday 6th February 9.30am Wellspring, social event that evening from 5pm at Colombia Press