**Workers’ Meeting Minutes**

**Date:**  Thursday 5th November 2020

**Present:** Salim, Farrukh, Catherine, Kalpna, Vikki, Penny, Jamie, Christine, Shelley, Rosie, Malcolm, Judith, Raminder, Rosy, Gillian, Annette, Mahtab, Vanita, Frank, Jim, Afshan, Judy, Carmel, David, Solinda, Steph, Gladys and Jonny.

**Guest speaker: Matt Lukeshi from Glasspool**

**Welcome and introductions:**

Everyone was welcomed to the “virtual” meeting by Kalpna and asked to say a few words about their role.

**Training update:**

Rosie introduced Steph and Gladys who were recently-joined Research & Campaigns volunteers. She also reminded everyone to update their GDPR training when prompted.

**Guest speaker:**

Matt Lukeshi a Trustee at Glasspool then gave a presentation on the history and work of Glasspool. Of particular significance for workers was his explanation for when applications are refused, namely when statutory support should be used or when the Trust is not satisfied that the beneficiary is in financial need. He then spoke about the Trust’s plans for the future, in which it was hoped that support organisations such as local CAs would be given more discretion over grants.

**Chief Officer Update:**

Salim spoke about the various projects, a total of 14, that funding had been awarded for.

The Bureau AGM would be held virtually on 19th November.

The Bureau had passed its quality audit with a very high score – next year’s audit would involve a visit and there was lots of work to prepare for this.

**Health & safety:**

Catherine reminded everyone the office was now closed due to lockdown. Anyone who needed to go into the office for some reason would need to seek agreement from her or an ASS and would need to follow distancing guidance when there. Any H&S issues should be reported as soon as possible.

**Bureau update:**

Catherine thanked everyone for their work and support for CA,Watford, whether they were working in the office, remotely or currently unable to work.

Statistics for November:

1276 casenotes

85 clients in our Work Queue

287 advice appointments

30 Evidence forms

140 simple queries

31 Face to face gateways

387 Advice Line calls

154 email enquiries

297 clients had been seen face to face since August.

37 workers were on the remote working rota – any issues or problems should be emailed to Catherine. Confidentiality and date protection were key and Catherine reminded everyone to delete their call history and any client information, and to keep access to casebook secure.

Catherine reminded everyone that Workplace was a useful source of advice – it was like Facebook for Citizens Advice. There was more information on the S&V webpage as well as the log in link which used the usual casebook usernames and passwords. She demonstrated how it worked and encouraged everyone to try it.

There had been a number of good client outcomes – Malcolm spoke about a successful PIP appeal; Penny had assisted clients to access UC advance payments which were payable as soon as ID was verified; and Jonny had referred a vulnerable client to the Healthy Hub worker who was assisting with housing. Katie the Healthy Hub worker had been unable to join a workers’ meeting but any questions could be emailed to her – these should be sent to Catherine. Everyone was encouraged to share outcomes at future meetings.

As social get-togethers were not currently possible, Catherine encouraged everyone to think about starting smaller social activity groups eg a book club – she asked for ideas to be emailed to her but in the meantime, the weekly Google Hangout was still taking place at 12.30 on Wednesdays

Finally, Catherine asked everyone to check the telephone numbers on the rota for each day for supervision as these varied from day to day. Skype could be used if there were problems getting hold of a supervisor and if necessary clients should be told they would be called back.

Vikki Molloy

November 2020