**WORKERS MEETING MINUTES – (Kalpna)**

**1st December 2020**

**PRESENT:**

Salim, Catherine, Vikki, Rosie, Kalpna, Christine, Jonathan, Carmel, Gillian, Vanita, Jamie, Mahtab, Malcolm, Judith K., Patsy, Rita, Robert, Shelly, Sue, Farrukh (trustee), Frank, Ian L., Geoff, Leena (trustee), Ruth, Solinder, Roy

**Welcome and introductions:**

Everyone was welcomed to the “virtual” meeting by Vikki and asked to say a few words about their plans for the Christmas holidays and asked to name a seasonal food that they liked and one they did not!

**SALIM – Chief Officers Update :**

-it is generally a quiet time at the moment

-CA have provided a grant with which to replace physical telephones and the current phone lines. We have taken the initiative to trial Softphones, an internet application with a view to going live with these in January 2021.

-There is a new project to commence shortly for which we require volunteers, suitable for admin., to assist in the distribution of an energy grant from the County Council for the relief of fuel poverty. County Council will decide on the criteria for eligibility and may include provision of other assistance eg white goods. If anyone is interested in volunteering, please speak to Salim.

**ROSIE- training update:**

-Thank you to all those who have been supporting the new trainees onto the rota remotely.

Further training courses will soon be available for QBC and welfare benefits; dates will be circulated when received.

-GDPR certificates expiring in December. There are some people who still need to renew their certificates by completing the training. Email will sent out as reminders.

**CATHERINE – Bureau update:**

-Thank you to all for their continuing hard work during these very difficult times. WCA stats are very good.

**In November:**

\*1199 case notes opened (yesterday was end of month so fig may change)

\*105 Work Q

\*130 emails from 1-20/11/20

\*110 Simple queries

\*384 Advice line calls were answered. Call demand for Watford was down to 622 from Oct when it was at 703. Overall there were 407 calls by Watford residents (includes calls taken for same by other bureaus).

\*232 (TBC) advice appointments

-Plan is for paid staff to return to the office from tomorrow 2/12/20. Volunteers who wish to return to the bureau should contact Catherine and a rota will be prepared so as not to have too many people in on the same day. We won`t be seeing clients F2F unless its exceptional circumstances. Demand for F2F was not huge during 3/8/20 – 3/11/20 when we had previously opened up to see clients ie not even a quarter compared to the same time last year. Also we are closing soon for Xmas.

-QAA -We are in the Green Band

-We have completed 32 Evidence Forms. We should all try and do at least 2 EF a month

-We have recruited 2 new Research and Campaign volunteers. They may send tasks where deemed necc for R&C purposes. They will talk more about the work they plan to do at the next workers meeting.

-Outcomes: Jan - had a large outcome £3000 where a client had been charged with an overpayment due to the fact that she had not notified tax credits that her husband had come to the UK for a visit. With our assistance, this overpayment claim was removed.

 Judith – after a lot of hard work, achieved supported housing for a client; sadly the client has decided to go on an extended visit to India and may not be able to accept/reserve the accommodation

Catherine thanked everyone for their part in every outcome – everyone plays a part from Receptionists to guidance tutor to gateway assessors to advisors, to admin staff to ASS to ASM

**FARRUKH – trustees update**

-We had an audit wherein the leadership self-assessment wherein out of 5, we scored 5 in all except 1 where we scored a satisfactory, marginally missing the 5. We had a tough assessor!

-Our AGM was short and sweet. Hopefully we will be able to have our normal AGM for next year with food/drink and social.

**CATHERINE – health & safety update:**

* For all remote workers to work safe at home – risk assessment forms need to be completed and returned. DSE = Display Screen Equipment – working safely with DSE at home. Check guidelines on BMIS eg ensure that screen is at the right height. Everyone to ensure these checks are done – speak to Catherine if need advice on this. Not sure if eye tests are covered in WCA insurance, but if required please speak to Salim or Catherine.
* If anyone suffers injury at work, please report to ASS/ASM ASAP.
* Everyone should now have joined Skype; if anyone hasn`t and needs to know how, please speak to ASS.
* If anyone is living on their own, you are asked to check in on Skype to say a quick “Hi” to everyone so that we know you are ok.
* Please ensure that you update contact details held for you at the Bx if any details have changed
* As and when returning to the office, please ensure maintain social distance, sanitise/wash hands and generally be careful eg make your own drinks etc.
* Remember we have social catch up every Wednesday 1230pm link on briefing
* Any sugg for socials eg smaller group doing different things on different days eg knitting/walks/reading, please let Rosie know.
* If you are happy to share your contact details with other members of staff then please let ASM know otherwise all contact details are confidential and will not be shared.

**VIKKI – QAA**

Brief summary on things to watch out for on employment cases.

Kalpna – In employment cases, explore debt and benefit partic. Where cl has lost their job. Also if cl has call about benefit/debt because they have lost their job, explore why they lost their job and that correct process was followed.

**CHRISTMAS CLOSING:**

Last working day Wednesday 23/12/20. Break 24/12/20-3/1/21. Return to office Monday 4/1/21

Next workers meeting: Wednesday 13/1/21