

HEADSUP

THE MENTAL HEALTH NETWORK

S P R I N G

Newsletter 2017

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Hello and a warm welcome to the Spring edition of the Ealing Headsup Newsletter. This is our second edition and we have lots of information, and upcoming events to share with you. If this is the first that you have heard of the HeadsUp Network, then please turn to the third page where you can read a short paragraph about what we do and how you can be a part of it.

Here are the updates on what has been happening over the last three months;

- The Network size has more than doubled. This is great news as more people are getting involved. However, we want to hear from many more people. If you are interested or you know someone who would be, get in touch.
- Our monthly Primary Care forum is now up and running. This forum is for those who access services such as; their local GP, IAPT, or Primary Care Mental Health. Here, you can share your experiences around Primary Care and meet new people. See page four, for more details.
- We also hold a monthly forum for those under Secondary Care services, such as; Community Mental Health teams, Recovery House East & West and Inpatient Services. This forum works very much the same as the Primary Care forum, and is a space where you can share your experiences. See page four, for more details.
- Weekly, we have our User Involvement group at the Solace Center in West Ealing. Here we hold discussions around mental health services, co-produce work together and work on campaigns. If you would like to attend this group, it is important to note that you must be a HeadsUp member, so please do get in touch first.
- We have recently held interview panel training. Those who attended can now sit on interview panels for the Trust; sitting on an interview panel is a paid opportunity. We also held a training day around basic social media skills. Those who attended are now able to access online involvement opportunities and connect with people online.

Wow! Well those are our updates on what has been happening over the last three months. We have more planned and we want you to get involved! We hope that you enjoy this newsletter and we look forward to hearing from you.

*Best wishes,
The HeadsUp
team.*



Interview with Community Advocate Anne Owen.

What is the role of the advocate?

Advocacy is about supporting people. It is about supporting someone to have their voice heard. For example, some people may find it stressful when attending meetings. I can help a person plan a meeting so that they know what they want to say to get their point across. If I am in the meeting with the person, I can prompt or remind them, or steer them back on course if they go off topic. I am a community advocate, therefore I only work with people in the community. There are advocates who work in inpatient settings. These are called Independent Mental Health Advocates (IMHA) and they are a statutory right for people who have been detained under the Mental Health Act. IMHA's know all of the details within the Mental Health Act and can support people to understand and exercise their rights. They can also support people to appeal against their section at a tribunal. More generic advocacy is about letting people know what they are entitled to, helping people make complaints and navigating social and health services.

What inspired you to become an advocate working for Mind?

I had previously worked as a mental health support worker which I greatly enjoyed. As a Support worker you try to teach people practical skills to help them get their life back on track. Support work also involves motivating people to use these skills to become more independent. I felt like I could take these skills and use them for advocacy. I have been doing this role for nine years now.



What are some of the challenges you have faced whilst working as an advocate?

I think the biggest challenge is getting people to engage with the service, so that they benefit most from it. Another challenge is making sure people are aware of the limitations of advocacy, and what I can and can't do. Some people can have unrealistic expectations. In advocacy we have to work within legal and social frameworks and can only do so much.

How have you been able to overcome these challenges?

It is all about working in partnership with others, I attend lots of events and meetings to network and learn about other services that provide help and support for people in Ealing. If there is a situation that advocacy cannot help with, I might be able to refer a person to another service, that is more appropriate to their needs.

What is it you find most rewarding about being an advocate?

The rewarding side is that I can give people practical skills so they can take small steps and move forward. This can be as simple as changing someone's housing band. This is effectively a system that means people are waiting, and if you get them closer to a higher band, it means their housing issues can be sorted quicker. This is a rewarding feeling.

Interview carried out by Charles Dillon.

If you feel that you could use the help of the Advocacy service, you can contact Anne at; Mind in Ealing and Hounslow on 020 8571 7545.

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What is the HeadsUp project?

The HeadsUp project is Mind's Mental Health Network for service user involvement and co-production. We believe that those who have accessed mental health services are experts by experience, and should have a say on how mental health services are developed and delivered. We provide a platform on which people can share their experiences, get involved, have their voice heard and influence mental health services in Ealing. We aim to do this through forums, focus groups, campaigns, and by ensuring that service users have a voice in the service development processes. If you have any experiences of using mental health services in Ealing, and would like to share your experiences, **we want to hear from you!**

DLA to PIP

Tips on how to deal with the upcoming changes in benefits.

For some time now, the government has been converting Disability Living Allowance (DLA), into Personal Independence Payments (PIP).

Even if you have a lifetime DLA award, you will still have to apply for PIP. Many dread the long and daunting form that comes through the letter box. The form contains many questions; some of which may seem a little strange or intrusive.

But don't lose hope.

The first thing, don't bury your head in the sand and get that form filled in! Otherwise, your DLA will be suspended. The form asks a wide ranging set of questions, and is run on a points based system.

The most important thing to do is to fight your corner, describe how your illness effects you and to fill the form in imagining yourself on one of your worst days. For example, you may not be able to cook or dress during times where you feel depressed. You must indicate this on your form. Other mental health questions centre around social anxiety and travelling to destinations. Again, you must imagine yourself on a bad day, when you're unwell and this stops you from doing everyday tasks. If your meds arrive in a dossett box, this also scores points. Fill the form out to the best of your abilities and be sure to refer to your mental health when answering the questions. Once again, it is important to let the DWP know how you are on your worst day.

Answer all of the questions. It may be a good idea to ask your Doctor for a letter, confirming your diagnosis and the medication that you are on. You can include this with the form. Alternatively you could include an up to date Care Plan.

Next, post the form off using the return envelope provided. You may then be called for an assessment. There have been alarming documentaries on television about unfair assessors who make unjust judgements and aren't sympathetic to mental illness. But don't let this put you off going to the assessment. Remember just how you answered the questions and hopefully the assessment will go well. For instance, if you reported that you have difficulty in travelling to new destinations, make sure this anxiety is conveyed in the assessment.

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Contact HeadsUp; Telephone ~ 07702562905 Email ~ headsupealing@mind-eh.org.uk

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After the assessment you will be given a decision. If it is a yes, then you will be awarded various bands of PIP based upon how much help the government thinks you need.

If the answer is no, your first step is to ask for a mandatory reconsideration. Here, you must write to the DWP covering each point on the rejection letter explaining how you think these decisions are wrong. If you can get a supporting letter from your Doctor, that is specific to where you have issues, then all the better.

If the answer is still no, you have the option of appealing. This will mean going to a tribunal. Over 50% of these tribunals are successful, so this is worth doing. You can obtain a form to fill in from your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

This change may seem worrying and cause you to feel anxious, which is completely understandable. However it is important that you do not ignore the change, fill the form out and return it as soon as you can, explaining how your condition can effect you on your worst day. And remember, there is support out there if you need it!

We have included some useful numbers and website addresses if you need more information or support. These can be found below.

Written by Curran Matthews.

Useful numbers and websites

DWP (PIP inquiries)

0345 850 3322 / www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions

Citizens Advice Bureau

0344 848 7903 / www.hillingdoncab.org.uk

Mind in Ealing and Hounslow:

020 8571 7545 / www.mind-eh.org.uk

Single Point of Access (mental health advice)

0300 1234 244

Ealing Samaritans

020 8560 2345 / www.samaritans.org/branches/ealing-samaritans

Upcoming events

Primary Care forum

25 May, 2PM—4PM @ St. John's Church, Mattock Lane.

Secondary Care forum

24th April & 22nd May, 2PM—4PM @ Recovery Hub, West Ealing.

User Involvement Group

Every Thursday, 11AM—3PM @ The Solace Center, Ealing.

We hope that you have enjoyed reading through the HeadsUp newsletter and that you have found it interesting and informative. We are looking forward to seeing you at one of our upcoming forums.

Best wishes,

The HeadsUp team



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