***Hackney Advice Forum***



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| **Meeting** | **Hackney Advice Forum**  |
| **Date/Time** | **Wednesday 15th December 2021, 10am-11.30am**  |
| **Venue** | Zoom call |
| **Chair** | Jakir Hussain (JH)- DWP |
| **Note taker** | Shamima Aktar, Hackney CVS (SA) |
| **Attendees**  | * Benji Landau
* Darryl Strawson- Engage Hackney, Community Navigators
* Dionne St Rose- Shoreditch Trust, Health and Wellbeing Coach my PCN is Hackney Marsh’s PCN
* Fiona Daly- Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB)
* Funda Senturk- Engage Hackney, Community Coordinator
* Hailu- Wick Mental Health Trust was operating in Newham for a long time just moved to Hackney member of CAN (Community African Network).
* Jennifer Obaseki
* Kanariya Yuseinova- Healthwatch Hackney
* Lorraine Mattis – Parent Carer support coordinator City and Hackney Carers Centre.
* Michael Foley- Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB)
* Michael Posen- Agudas
* Neima Macfoy- Huddlestone Centre
* Nicola Branch- Hackney Shine
* Nurul Chowdhury – Family Action
* Oliver Moore- The Round Chapel
* Orhan Dil- Daymer
* Sermin Aksoy- Refugee Women Association
* Shahana Begom- Mind in City, Hackney & Waltham Forest
* Solanki Yemi
* Stephen Hanshaw – DWP
* Tola- DEA (Disability Employment Advisors, DWP)
* Umme Begum- DWP
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| **Apologies**  | * Zafer Kursun- Derman
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|  Agenda  |
| 1. | Welcomes and Introduction  |
| 2.  | Minutes of last meeting* Afghan Refugees
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| 3.  | Updates from Hackney and Hoxton Job Centre Plus- Jakir Hussain, Partnership Manager, Hackney, Tower Hamlets and City of London:- Covid-19 Service Delivery Update- Current Economic growth opportunities- Trust and Protect - agreed to revisit the discussion on this- Escalation Process update- Other local updates |
| 4.  | Disability Employment Advisor (DEA)- Ademola Adediran:- Current Service Delivery- Challenges- Opportunities for partnership |
| 5.  | Update from the group |
| 6.  | Topic of next meeting:- DWP Local updates - standing item on agenda- Pension Credit- agree in the meeting whether this should be covered in a session or in one of the future HAF Meeting |
| 7.  | Date of next meeting - Feb or March 2022 |
| 8.  | Any Other Business  |

1. **Welcomes and Introduction**

JH welcomed everyone on the call and requested all to introduce themselves by stating their name and organisation they represent.

1. **Minutes of last meeting**

**Actions to follow up:**

* **PIP Referral process information** *– JH to follow up with Yousaf.*
* *NC in the last meeting raised a concern about when sending in referrals to the home visiting team, no acknowledgement of receiving the email is given from the home visiting team.*

*Rehana assured NC she will take this back to the team and can raise this with them.*

**Action to follow up-** *JH to liaise with Yousaf about this and to then update NC.*

* **Afghan Refugees** – SA to follow up with CH from Hackney Refugee Forum for a written update.

**Action-** *SA to ask CH for written update and SA to then share with colleagues.*

* ***Afghan Refugee Resettlement- Update:***

Update provided by SH:

* There is a sort of collaboration with the local partners who are looking to create a robust support offer as they can.
* There are families resettled in Hackney- in terms of numbers of families currently being placed in borough would have been useful. It was Nil possibly there is one now.
* The critical thing is whether it is services such as the job centres or vcs organisations that we work together collectively to support people who have been placed in the borough. The key bit is if they need to claim benefit colleagues in Hackney Job Centre either Mare Street or Hillman Street which ever one is most appropriate understand who it is that they need to talk to and if there are things that we need to put together to create a robust offer for those families then we do it at pace. In wider context we had a team working in bridging hotel which are in City of London for some time now since the first Afghan place there, that offer is included helping people make claims where they can, its included support with employment related services which included support with ESOL, City and Hackney … 14.15...
* In Tower Hamlets and Newham …
* **Work, Health, Disability Green Paper-** Rebecca Stacey, Policy and Campaigns Officer, Z2K

**Action-** *RS to share the campaign action guide with SA to share with all*

1. **Updates from Hackney and Hoxton Job Centre Plus- Jakir Hussain, Partnership Manager, Hackney, Tower Hamlets and City of London:**

Jakir Hussain is moving on to another role as the Partnership Manager for Havering, Redbridge, and Waltham Forest. This is the last Hackney Advice Forum meeting that Jakir chaired. Going forward, Umme Begum is the new Partnership Manager, Hackney, Tower Hamlets, and City of London.

Current Service Delivery- Mare Street, Hillman Street and Hoxton Job Centre Update:

* We are open, most of our work coaches are back in the building
* Hillman Street- the newest job centre, if anyone is interested in seeing the new site email Jakir or Umme who will be happy to give a tour of the building.
* Hillman Street site has 18-24 claimants and some 25+ claimants there
* Majority of the 25+ claimants are at Hackney Mare Street
* Majority of the Hackney Claimants over to Hackney Mare Street and Hackney Hillman Street.
* Hoxton Job Centre although it is within London Borough of Hackney it is now serving predominantly Tower Hamlets claimants. It will be Tower Hamlets, Islington and City of London Claimants. We do have small proportion of Hackney claimants.
* Around 3,000 claimants were moved over to Mare Street and Hillman Street.
* All 3 job centres are currently open, and we do have front of house staff.
* Hillman street is appointment only job centre.
* If you have any service users that need support, best thing will be to direct them to Mare Street that is where they have front of house team that can support with any benefit queries.

There was a request in the meeting to arrange a Hillman Street site tour.

**Action-** *Jakir to arrange a date in the new for this site visit for colleagues.*

Current Economic Growth Opportunities:

* Current circumstances with the Omicron variant which can be coming into effect, we are not sure what is going to happen in the next coming weeks, days or even months.
* It will be good to keep an eye out
* There is a huge shortage in the hospitality sector, Hackney Council are working to fill up the hospitality vacancies that are available within Hackney mainly Shoreditch, Dalston, Hackney Wick areas. In those areas there are some job vacancies in the hospitality sector available.
* Kickstart continuing- This was extended by 3 months it was due to end of December but now is due to end 31st March 2022. In couple of days, any employers that is interested putting together Kickstart placement for a young person 17th December 2021 is last date that employers could apply for that. Kickstart is a government scheme aimed at 18–24-year-olds who are on universal credit and is essentially 6 months placement with an employer which paid at minimum wage. If anyone wants any more information on Kickstart reach out to JH.

Trust and Protect:

* Essentially during the pandemic, we had a lot of claims coming into the job centre and essentially what the department decided to do was to put in place something called Trust and Protect. When someone makes a claim, whatever they put on the claim whether it is housing cost or children we verified it because we never had the resources to check those document and evidence with the job centres running limited service in terms of supporting vulnerable people. We were not inviting people to bring the documents in such as passport ID, tenancy agreement etc we started this scheme called Trust and Protect where we verified people’s housing costs. We recruited almost 14,000 new colleagues within pandemic.
* This has come to an end.
* If you have any service users that are having issues and want to raise queries on anything they are stuck on with providing the evidence, advise them to reach out to Jakir or Umme, we can find out who their work coach is etc.

General Advice from FS to all - If you do have any clients that you know or service users that previously were working but had to stop working to get the UC prompt them to keep an eye and advise them to not ignore the general updates.

Escalation Process Update:

* The most recent escalation routeway was shared with SA who shared this with HAF members.
* This includes the Hoxton, Mare Street and Poplar Job Centres.
* This includes key contacts- partnership manager, advance customer service support leader which was previously known as safeguarding leader & work coaches' team within the job centres.

Michael Posen- Recently had problems with UC where the individual won an appeal against DWP, nothing has happened, this has been going on for months, there seems to be lack of communication, the decision from the tribunal has not been acted upon how will that be actioned?

Jakir- The most recent up to date escalation process, the contact details is on there to whom you should contact.’

DWP- Festive period update:

* Those are the 3 dates the offices will be closed Monday 20th December, Monday 28th December and 3rd January 2022.
* We will be opened all other dates.

**Action-** *SA to re-circulate the Escalation Process with all.*

1. **Disability Employment Advisor (DEA)- Ademola Adediran:**

**Update shared by Tola:**

* We cover 5 offices- Hillman Street and Mare Street included.
* We have 15 disability advisors where 5 of them cover Hillman Street and Mare Street.
* We know primarily the job of the DWP is to support people into work as DEA we support with health conditions, those who class themselves as vulnerable into work.
* We help with benefits, help them access benefits
* For those who are in hospitals they need to put in a claim, we work with welfare officers within the hospitals to help them access and claim benefits.
* We do encourage co-location-we have some service providers that we are working with now, and we do encourage that if you want co-location is possible.
* If you want to visit our offices, you are welcome to do that.
* We have DEA on site during the Christmas periods that is within the time when the offices are closed, we make sure DEA are around as we are aware during the Christmas period there tends to be a lot of people who are in vulnerable positions or for some reason have lost access to their benefits. DEA are there to help those vulnerable claimants and those with health conditions.

Challenges:

* We have customers that have claimed benefits they have been discharged into the community and they have gone back into hospitals, at times they are at risk losing their benefits. Currently we have been working with welfare person within Hackney in one of the hospitals in Hackney, to find ways whereby we can capture those claimants and make sure they get their benefits.
* We have some customers that do lack some of the money for example we have a customer who stroke dependent we work with their support workers to find ways in which where we are able to release payments, so we do not put that customer back to its vulnerable state.

**Questions and Answers**

**Q. Could you give an example on the sort of support as DEA you provide?**

1. Tola- ‘*For example if someone is in hospital and they need to claim benefits, they can get in touch with us and as DEA we can facilitate that online service as Universal Credit is online, we can help facilitate that process to make journey easier.’*

**Q. In terms of clients who have been discharged from hospital without the application and are back into the community and are house bound is this another scenario where we can tap into the DEA’s?**

A.Tola-’ *Yes that is one of the areas we have the challenge, sometimes we don’t know until the welfare officer gets in touch and we have a meeting with one of the welfare officers and I can understand only when told that the customers been discharged, we are then contacted that there is claimant in need we could have captured that claim whilst in hospitals*.’

**Q. Do you help with completing form for Attendance Allowance and Personal Independent payments?**

A.Tola- ‘*No we do not complete forms this is because of conflict of interest, what happens is that if there is a situation whereby the customers fail to get the benefits or the attendance allowance then it always falls back to us, what we tend to do is refer to other service providers to help complete those forms for the customer. If we have to it would be word for word what the customer says we will not add to it, polish it or take away, most of the time we tend to not to as it causes a lot of problems in the past*.’

Jakir- it was few months ago where the DEA team expanded within the job centres, we had 2 or 3 DEA within each job centres they have doubled we have a lot more DEA within Hackney, Poplar, Hillman Street job centres. There is more scope for partnership work, if you have any sort of ideas or want to work with the DEA team do feel free to reach out to Jakir, Tola or Umme to discuss any sort of colocation.

**Action-** *If anyone is interested to discuss co-location to contact Tola, Jakir or Umme.*

1. **Update from the group**

**Engage Hackney, Funda Senturk/Darryl Strawson:**

* We had a Malware attack in November this has affected our clients in terms of contacting people.
* If you are a service that have been referring in and if you have not been contacted, please contact this main duty number 08009534044. We have tried to inform all our stakeholders as much as we can.
* We are working to resolving the matter.
* As a service we had a reduction, from 1300 we have gone to 380 customers.
* From 1st December onwards we have moved to the new structure and have lost a lot of colleagues who had to leave due to the restructure.
* What we do have and have been doing well is drop ins
* If you do have client, one off piece of work we are encouraging people to send to our drop ins which is Monday-Friday between 10am-2pm. The times will be changed soon due to a lot of uptakes on it.
* We are based on Laburnum Street
* Hackney Foodbank Festive Season Distribution Centre Opening Times and December Lunch Club- Funda to circulate information with Shamima to circulate with all.

**Action-** *Funda to circulate leaflet with opening times of the Hackney Foodbank Festive Season Distribution Centre with Shamima to circulate to all.*

**Hackney Shine, Nicola Branch:**

* Update on the service we are providing at Hackney Shine over the Christmas period- an email went out to partners yesterday; this week is the last week that the phones are open at Hackney Shine.
* Friday 17th December after 5pm no phone lines will be open; we no longer have answer phone service anymore.
* We are closed and will reopen 4th January 2022.
* We are taking referrals the usual email methods.

**Mesila UK, Benji Landau:**

* Nationwide organisation North London, Northeast London, Manchester, Newcastle
* We are start-up in the Hackney Area- we recently put something in place a pilot project to work in service provision in the area, one to one financial coaching for low income to middle income families working through issues in the families specifically in the orthodox Jewish community.
* We work in collaboration with other organisations in the area to help fill the circle.
* We do one to one coaching, debt counselling, webinars, talks etc
* This pilot has been successful over the last 6 months

**Shoreditch Trust, Dionne St Rose:**

* We will be closed from 27th December 2021 till 3rd January 2022.
* We will reopen on 4th January 2022
* We have a new Health and Wellbeing Coach that would be joining Hackney Marsh PCN, she started this Monday and will be doing her induction. Early January we both will be open to caseloads.

**Citizen’s Advice Bureau, Fiona Daly and Michael Foley:**

* We will be closed from Christmas Eve to the 4th January 2022
* This year we are running extra specialist service 29th, 30th and 31st and we are working out the details with Hackney Council specifically this is for Crisis Support, energy fuel voucher top ups (up to £49 per household depending on their circumstances we can go more, people must be on pre-payment meter).
* There will be limited service and service will be specifically open for fuel vouchers, crisis support, food vouchers.
* We are still working out the details for the fuel vouchers – further details about this to follow.
* There is funding for this scheme available for Tower Hamlets as well.
* Referrals can be emailed to Michael and Fiona- mfoley@eastendcab.org.uk & fdaly@eastendcab.org.uk

**Healthwatch Hackney, Kanariya:**

* Next week (20th December 2021) is our last week and we will reopen on 4th January 2022.

**Refugee Women Association, Sermin Aksoy**

* We have started another project
* Thursdays- employment advice for refugees and migrants not just for women open to men as well.
* Fridays giving ex-offenders employment advise.

**City & Hackney Carers Centre, Lorraine Mattis:**

* We are closed on Christmas day and all the other public holidays.
* We have limited-service next week (20th December 2021 week)

**Agudas, Michael Posen:**

* The Orthodox community do not celebrate this time of the year, our service will be limited as there is someone available during this time.

**The Round Chapel, Oliver Moore:**

* The Round Chapel has a drop in every Sunday and Wednesday – Sundays the drop in is from 2pm-4pm and on Wednesdays 1pm-3pm
* Offer support anything ranging from form filling, reconsideration of benefit decisions, applying for housing assistance, Care Acts assistance etc.
* Last day is on the 22nd of December 2021 and will return for 1st drop in of the year on 5th January 2022.

**Huddleston Centre, Neima Macfoy:**

* We work with disabled children and young people 9-25years from mainly Hackney and some from neighbouring boroughs of City, Haringey, Newham, Islington and Waltham Forest.

**Daymer, Orhan Dil:**

* We have drop in Monday and Tuesday
* Appointment only drop in
* We will be closed on 24th December 2021 and reopen on 4th January 2022.

**City and Hackney Mind, Shahana:**

* Our service support’s people with mental health and is aimed at anyone who is struggling with thoughts of suicide, self-harm or talk through some of the feelings that they are having.
* We are called Safe Connection and it is in Mind in the City, Hackney and Waltham Forest. It covers other borough as well Tower Hamlets, Newham, Redbridge, Barking, Dagenham and Havering.
* Leaflets about our service can be emailed with SA to circulate to all.
* Apart from Christmas Day and Boxing day we are open all other days.
* People can email us if they do not want to talk, we can support them emotionally where we do up to 5 sessions where we try to support with what’s been going on with them and the end we create a personalised wellbeing plan and see what kind of support they need and we will direct them on the right path.
* Email address- Shahana.Begom@mindchwf.org.uk

**Action-** *Shahana to send information to Shamima to circulate with all.*

**CAN, Hailu:**

* CAN work we are awareness of covid
* Populated stuff covid 19 including translating documents in languages such as African, French etc.
* Weekly programmes giving information on emotional support available.
* Refugee council- survey for our community groups identify needs, the needs have come out which are immigration and language problems.

**Talk Changes at Homerton Hospital, Yemi Solanke:**

* Employment Advisor, we work together alongside the therapists helping people into work, people unemployed also people who are in work and are looking for another job.
* Referrals are usually made through the therapists and through the GPs. The GPs refers to the therapists and then the therapists refer to us if they need our support.

**Obaseki Solicitors, Jennifer Obaseki:**

* Obaseki Solicitors is based 27 Bentley Road London N1 3DE
* We offer full legal service - Housing Law and family legal aid
* We are always opened and have been opened during the last extreme lockdown.
* We offer full legal practice
* We have spare office we can help to offer for distribution- safe store any parcels for people to pick up safely.
* We do offer frontline training I.e., innovation training etc
* We have a full team with multi language- turkish, hindi, russians, nigerian, lithuanian speakers.
* Telephone 02077397549
* email info@obasekisolicitors.com

**VCS Assembly Update, Shamima Aktar:**

* The next VCS Assembly will be on Supporting What Matters: How can the VCS in Hackney and City enhance care and empower those ageing, living with a disability or long-term condition?
* The 3rd VCS Assembly taking place on Wednesday 26th January 2022.
* Further information can be found here - <https://crm.hcvs.org.uk/civicrm/event/info?reset=1&id=988>

**DWP, Umme Begum:**

* Worth mentioning household support fund- central government funding 500 million pound which was announced in September 2021.
* 2.8 million pound was allocated in addition and conjunction with the help already available.
* It is funding to vulnerable families for immediate and essential costs during the winter period which specifically any needs occur from 6th October 2021 to 31st March 2022.
* Different local authorities are managing this fund separately- encourage to contact Hackney benefit office to know more.
* This fund can be used for food, clothing, utilities in exceptional circumstances housing.

Jakir spoke with Tim or Ross from Hackney council they were going to provide some information how to access that funding- Jakir to follow up and share information with SA to share with all.

This was shared on the chat by Jennifer:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/application-for-change-of-conditions-of-leave-to-allow-access-to-public-funds-if-your-circumstances-change> - APPLY FOR REMOVAL OF NO RECOURSE TO PUBLIC FUNDS - SO PRESETTLED CAN ACCESS BENEFITS

1. **Topic of next meeting**
* DWP Local Updates- standing item on the agenda
* Pension Credit/Pre-settle status – to have housing benefit officer and Hackney Council both present in the meeting.
* Tigrayan new arrivals

Hailu- Ethiopia there is a genocide unleashed by two countries, population of 7 million people living there. All of them utilising modern weapons drones it is one year now. As a result, we have got 70,000 have moved to Sudan and now we have seen refugees coming into the UK, not sure how many are living in the hotels.

**Action-** *SA to touch base with Hailu about putting Tigrayan new arrivals on the agenda.*

1. **Date of next meeting**

**Action-** Shamima to set a date for February 2022 avoiding half term week.

1. **Any Other Business N/A**