



**Forum
Central**

A collective voice
for the health and care
third sector

Learning Disability Member Meet Up

May 28th 2020

Learning Disability Member Meet-Up

28th May 2020 | 14:00pm-15.00pm | Via Zoom

Introduction

The Learning Disability Meet-Up brings together Forum Central members with an interest in Learning Disabilities. Before Covid-19 the Meet Up would offer the opportunity to network as well as news and updates from the 3rd Sector, city-wide strategic updates and keeping members informed about the work of Forum Central.

Meet ups are now being held virtually via Zoom. The intention is to provide an opportunity during the government restrictions and social distancing guidance for learning disability member organisations to connect and share updates, challenges and learning on the impact of Covid-19 on their services and members.

In addition, the sessions are being used to share the creative adjustments that member organisations have made and what solutions have worked in overcoming the issues faced. The sessions are now taking place fortnightly and are left informal so that the topic of future meetings can be decided upon collectively and dependent upon member organisations' priorities.

Participants

- Jez Coram – Forum Central
- Andy Rawnsley - Aspire
- Caroline Aylward - TCV
- Luke Aylward- Advonet / Leeds Autism AIM
- Jenna Peel – Outside the Box
- Emma Midgley – Leeds City Council - Commissioning
- Mandy Haigh - Leep1
- John Rozenstein - Chapeltown CAB
- Sue Munday - HFT
- Anna Marie Garbutt - Health for All
- Carol Ann Reed - Health for All
- Linda Langstaff – Specialist Autism Services
- Rachel Kingdom – Yorkshire Dance
- Bob McDougall - People in Action
- Jenny Sellers – SNAPS and Leeds Weekend Carers Association
- Claire Nixson – Advonet / Asking You
- Claire Hawker – Specialist Autism Services
- Sharon Costello – Catholic Care
- Elaine Wilkes – Carers Leeds
- Yasmine Benelkadi - Haqooq
- Wayne Dunn – United Response
- Kaldip Chaggar-Brown –Creative Support
- Erin Hodson – Caring For Life
- Marie Meegan – Catholic Care

- Ramzan Khan
- Cath Lee – Leeds Mencap

Notes from the meeting

Jez opened the meeting and gave the following updates:

- **Learning Disability Week**
Please contact Madeleine at Connect in the North if you are planning anything for learning disability week so it can be added to their listings for the week.
madeleine@citn.org.uk
- **Partnership Board Meetings**
Partnership Board Meetings have been cancelled for the rest of the year with potential for a virtual meeting to be held in September to look at the response to Covid 19.
- **Covid-19 walk-to testing facility – pre booked**
Launched for people living within walking distance of the Bridge Street community centre, Rider Street, in the LS9 7BQ postcode area of Leeds.
<https://forumcentral.org.uk/coronavirus-pre-booked-community-testing/>
- **Reminder for shielded people to register online**
A reminder for people who are shielding to [register online](#) even if they do not need additional support now. This includes clinically extremely vulnerable people living in long-term care facilities.
- **100% Digital - Digital Inclusion sessions – supporting people with learning disabilities – 4th June**
<https://forumcentral.org.uk/21-may-11-june-digital-champions-online-training-sessions/>
- **National Lottery Coronavirus Community Support Fund**
The new Coronavirus Community Support Fund is making available £200m in Government funding that will be aimed primarily at small to medium organisations in England.
To increase community support to vulnerable people
To reduce temporary closures of essential charities and social enterprises
<https://forumcentral.org.uk/coronavirus-community-support-fund/>

- **Keeping Neurodivergent people connected Project**

Advonet and Specialist Autism Services are involved in the new regional 'Keeping Neurodivergent People Connected' project.

They are two of the services that are funded to run short-term information support for adults in Leeds with neurodivergent conditions.

They will provide information by phone, email and text on staying safe during the COVID-19 crisis. More information on their websites.

link: <https://advonet.org.uk/keeping-neurodivergent-people-connected/>.

link: <https://www.specialistautismservices.org/keeping-people-connected/>.

- **People Matters Adult Learning Course – June / July**

People Matters will be running their remote adult learning programme throughout June and July for adults aged 19+ with learning disabilities.

<http://peplemattersleeds.co.uk/adult-learning/>

- **Building Based Day Services Group and recovery plans**

Andy let me know that Aspire and a few other organisations with Building Based Day Services are meeting as a group to talk about recovery plans. Other organisations are welcome to join. Contact Andy Rawnsley:

Andrew.Rawnsley@aspirecbs.org.uk

- **Daily Update Email**

Please also contact Andy Rawnsley if you would like to receive his daily email with a summary of guidance and information from the day, plus song of the day:

Andrew.Rawnsley@aspirecbs.org.uk

Main Discussion Point:

Steps organisations are taking as Covid-19 restrictions are eased

What was asked for in the last member meet-up (7th May 2020) was a collective discussion on how organisations are planning for the next weeks and months considering the easing to restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Questions that have come up in conversations have been around how to plan programmes for shielding and non-shielding members, how to run groups under social distancing, if at all, standards and processes for infection control, testing, risk assessments, renewal of contracts and funding under adjusted services, evaluating the quality of work and evidencing it, maintaining the health and wellbeing of staff, continuing services with reduced numbers due to digital exclusion, how to connect with the most isolated, how to ensure financial sustainability and what new policies are needed?

Open questions the group on what people are doing to plan? What is needed to support this?

Building Based Recovery Group

- Andy Rawnsley talked about the Building Based Services Recovery Group that has been set up. Organisations are starting to think about what their future offer may look like. Particularly how we get from where we are now to being able to offer some building-based daytime activity. In a safe a way as possible given the vulnerability of the people the organisations support. Everyone in the first meeting was of a similar view that what ever is done needs to be done in small steps. One meeting has taken place to share approaches, risk assessments, and thinking. The group reached a position in the first meeting that there is likely to be a combination, at different points in time dependent upon a whole range of risk factors, of building based service, community support and an online offer. That will have to flex depending on government guidance and restrictions.

The issues about opening buildings to vulnerable people from multiple settings is the same set of issues for different organisations. No one wants to rush into it. Some providers have maintained different types of service, through out the pandemic, but there have only been one or two that have maintained a building-based offer. Other than the 24/7 services.

If anyone would like to join the group please contact Andy:

Andrew.Rawnsley@aspirecbs.org.uk

Commissioning

- Linda asked a question about commissioner attendance at the first Building Based Services Recovery Group meeting as they had not received any guidance. There was no commissioner at the meeting. Linda asked the question, does everyone feel the same?
- Carol Ann presumed that most, if not all organisations had received information from commissioning about organisations' short, medium- and long-term plans.
- Andy thought that information had only gone to block commissioned services that are delivering day services. Andy has had discussions with Lana Northey in the City Council commissioning team, talking about the best ways for commissioning to engage with the third sector around the issues we are all facing. Particularly for those organisations that run building-based day services. From memory Andy thought Lana had mentioned that they commissioned activities through the day from 40-60 organisations. From that collection of organisations they have different types of organisations. Of which Building Based were one type. Andy and Lana had discussed Commissioning organising a meeting that organisations could share what the issues were. Lana may be keen to pursue this. Since then the recovery group was set up. Andy felt commissioners may be waiting for organisations to go back with what their plans are, rather than commissioning taking a prescriptive lead. Andy was very positive about Lana being keen to have an infrastructure of third sector organisations at the end of the current situation. Andy felt that if organisations came up with a coherent plan then commissioning would be keen to follow that plan.

Track and Trace

- Linda mentioned potential discussion at the Building Based Recovery group on track and trace. Another obstacle to opening buildings. With day services, and everyone there, even if social distancing is being followed, if one person is infected and they are connected to the app, it could in effect shut the whole service down.
- Andy mentioned the guidance that has been released and that staff who work in health and social care are exempt. In effect that means people who work in health and social care are exempt from the impact of track and trace so that staff don't have to keep isolating themselves and new staff brought in. The thinking was that to maintain the health and social care provision across the country staff would not need to isolate for 14 days. There may be an impact on people using services if one person becomes symptomatic, do the rest of the people using the service have to isolate?

Risk Assessments / Social distancing

- Linda talked about the task of going into the building and trying to risk assess it to see how they could open the service with social distancing, how many people they could get in the building, and what that would look like for each individual site. That is the first tentative step.
- Mandy talked about prioritising. They now have lots of online members and how to transition back into day service. Mandy felt that they are not ready to go back yet in terms of space, being able to maintain social distancing, and it being very hard to keep people apart. How to keep the online service and transition back to the day service?

Travel to services

- Carol Ann mentioned before considering the use of the building it is how people get to the building. The majority of their people are brought on their minibus and how to maintain social distancing on the minibus. How do people get there? Would they just have a few people?
- Jez mentioned people travelling independently on the bus and the risk factors involved.

Staff teams and resource for multiple services now needed

- Linda mentioned having to run a double service so continuing the online service and staff that service and also start to staff in house services as they open up. There may be people who don't want to come back to service as the risk is too great so having the right amount of staffing to accommodate the dual service.
- Carol Ann mentioned that most people coming to The Bridge do not access their online offer. Most of their people, because they are not able to be supported to get online, are being communicated to by telephone. Staff have started to go out and visit. Social distance

walks. Take round Arts and Crafts pack. Online uptake hasn't been as great as they wish it could be.

- Linda mentioned it is hard when working with such a diverse group. There are those that engage online and those that don't. They have to continue wellbeing calls, despite the online service going really well. They are making sure that on every day that a person would usually attend despite their interaction with the service, the person would get a well being call, because it is incredibly important. They are having to split services for the diversity of people.
- Carol Ann mentioned well being calls and family members wanting their own interaction on the phone call. If there are members that they feel aren't being connected with via phone then they go to the top of the list for visits. Operating on many levels.
- Mandy agreed on increased staff resource and all agreed on difficulties of planning multiple services with small staff teams.
- Linda mentioned staff resource and if staff members would be continuing to isolate as services transition. Also, with added home pressures of childcare. Having to diversify the staff team completely and how to manage all those elements?
- Jez asked the question about what is needed to support organisations further?

Commissioning

- Linda said a key component is to have support from the commissioning teams so that services don't feel they are under that much pressure to open in a way that isn't safe.
- Emma from commissioning suggested FAQs to go back to the commissioning team.
- Jez offered to coordinate across organisations.
- Emma mentioned that she is there representing the commissioning team and that she would be able to talk to Lana. There was assurance that they don't want organisations to feel that they are out on a limb. They want to be useful and be in contact as much as possible. Emma suggested emailing her directly.
- Andy noted that discussions with Lana had been helpful and positive. Andy thought the position the council are taking is that they are not putting pressure on to reopen services.

Collective working / streamlining

- Andy wanted to pick up on a couple of points, the first, not duplicating effort, so organisations that have building based services learning from each other rather than individually is key. Coming together at the recovery group meetings being planned will

develop this. The second, having a programme of online activity. If across the city there could be an overall programme then some of the issues faced about how to offer an online service, a community-based service and a building service, with reduced staff. If there is a city-wide online offer that might mean all organisations won't spend time on activities that aren't core to their business. Share some of the workload across organisations.

Coordinating online activities

- Mandy mentioned previously talking to Jez about a way to co-ordinate all the online activity, especially when they were getting more and more people joining the group. At times it has been overwhelming when opened to everyone. Makes sense to co-ordinate activity.
- Yasmine suggested every organisation send their weekly timetable to one place and then the timetable mailed out to everyone.
- Andy mentioned Through the Maze already collate a weekly timetable of online activities. One of the challenges is making sure all the organisations are sending their weekly timetable to Through the Maze. Usually a lag time in organising an activity and then it being posted each week. Different organisations offering different structures, some more ad hoc, some structured. If a full timetable could be produced then activities wouldn't be happening at the same time and individual organisations can concentrate on their activity, and then free up some more time for community based or building based.
- Yasmine is a support co-worker for a lady who is partially sighted with no family and no internet. Helping to support the lady to get online. Difficult for people to access online activities, highlighting digital exclusion and social isolation. Yasmine asked about Wi fi offers? 100% Digital Leeds was suggested for tablets that are 4G enabled. Phone companies were suggested as well.
- Carol Ann mentioned that online activities aside they would still need Zoom meetings to keep people connected in their service. It would be great for people to join in other activities but for people who can get online it would be important to come together on a weekly basis.
- Mandy mentioned they do a Zoom meeting every day at 3 for people to catch up and Carol Ann and Linda agreed that it is great for people to just see each other and keep up their social connections created before the lockdown. They wouldn't want to see that fall by the wayside.
- Linda mentioned their members with Autism and that it would be difficult to go into something new with new support.
- Jez offered to follow up on contacting Forum Central Members and asking for online activities to be sent to Through the Maze. Andy said the place we need to get to is all getting our timetable to Through the Maze in enough advance for it to be listed at Through the Maze and then emailed out to everybody. Mandy suggested sending timetables and then having a small meeting to co-ordinate what's happening. Claire added that we are finding

out what works for different groups of people so things will settle down and there will be a set thing that happens on a set day every week. Andy added that we will probably end up with closed groups that are needed for people to maintain friendships. And then wider activities open to a wider number of people. To start with if organisations can get all their programmes to Connect in the North on a weekly basis, then once that process is up and running then using Mandy's idea about getting someone from each organisation to come together to work out which of the activities can be mainstreamed on a regular basis. This would then reduce duplication of investment across organisations. And mean less development time is needed when another organisation is able to do already do it. For example, Aspire have been signposting to other online activities provided as organisations are doing it better but this would mean that Aspire may be able to visit people at home who can't do the online activities. Sharing of skillsets across different organisations. The current circumstance have given opportunity for us to think about we can more collaboratively.

Facilitating Online Zoom Calls with members

- Anna Marie asked the question about having too many people on a zoom call and it becomes too rowdy. Mandy mentioned a group run by one of their members and everyone putting their mic on mute and being polite to other members in the zoom call. Linda mentioned having 22 people on some sessions and having to mute and use the chat bar. They are also running a variety of sessions – small to large. Catering to needs.
- Bob added they have come up with some mutually agreed rules for engagement in the group sessions. The moderator has the group rules showing on their screen.
- Anna-Marie asked the question about capping numbers for sessions if people are switching between online activities and organisations. Luke added that for autistic people in their sessions people may not like video and just use audio only. This may be an option for groups. Their groups are starting to get busier and are advertised on Through the Maze.

Carers

- Elaine mentioned that if carers need support they can call the Carers Leeds advice line number and they can offer support to friends and family who may be struggling at the moment. They can tailor calls to support that person. Carers week coming up between the 8th and 14th June and the theme for that week is carers being visible. They are looking for any blogs or vlogs to show what people have been doing. How they are visible during lockdown.

Carers Leeds advice line 0113 380 4300 available Monday-Friday 9am-5pm
This is for friends and family who need individual support.

Carers Week from Monday 8th June to 14th June. Theme is making caring visible.
Please go to Carers Leeds website for further information www.carersleeds.org.uk
If you would like to sign up for Carers Leeds newsletter via email, please again go to Carers Leeds website
Please ask friends and family members to send their stories to Carers Leeds.

Second Discussion Point:

Mental Health Workforce Needs

There then followed a shorter discussion about Mental Health Workforce Needs.

This was to gather information for Karen Fenton and Rachel Cooper after their Mental Health Workforce Needs session on 21st May 2020, scoping the needs for organisations.

Is there adequate awareness of existing mental health support and resources for staff and is anything different needed?

- Linda Langstaff from Specialist Autism Services mentioned that every week they try to pull information from different sources that will be beneficial to people and they have found a lot of good stuff around Mental Health e.g. Mindwell, Leeds Wellbeing Service who they have been able to refer people to. Within a week they have accessed one to one sessions. For them it was about having someone available to pull from all the resources and being able to use them. Fortunate position that they have been able to find a lot of good material.
- Yasmine from Haqooq asked if information could be shared. Linda mentioned it was usually from Andy's daily update, Forum Central information, Through the Maze and advised to sign up to all newsletters and then go through the information on a daily basis. Linda mentioned they are not getting information from anywhere unusual. It is all out there, it is about having the time. Hard for Yasmine as they do not have similar capacity to be able to go through information in that way.
- Anna-Marie from Bee Together mentioned getting printed materials to carers who are not online or doing something on Radio Leeds. Having some physical information for people. Elaine mentioned that Carers could ring the advice line and they would be able to send out hard copies to people of information available. Please refer to Carers Leeds as they are offering ongoing one to one support. They have an autism carers group as well.
- Andy Rawnsley reminded everyone that the funded organisation for collating information for learning disability is Through the Maze so if any organisation has information it is critical that it goes to Through the Maze and we use that as the place. For a learning disability specific issue that is where information should be sent.

Jez closed the meeting with a question on how when the next meeting should be held and the topic. Yasmine suggested a review of where we are with collating online activities. Andy reminded everyone about his daily update.