



Disabled People's Forum

Minutes of a meeting of the Disabled People's Forum held at on Friday 6 August 2021 at 11.00 am.

Present Martin deRosario, Cllr Alan Chantler, Graeme Wilson, Rashmi Shah, Jatish Shah, Alex Rex, Laura Graham, Diana Belfon, Ashley Tugby, Anthony Dumi, Carly Galpin, Paul Thompson, Kit Nicholas, Debs Burns, Debbie MacColl

1. **Welcome, Introductions and Apologies**

Everyone was welcomed to the meeting and introductions made around the screen. Cllr Alan Chantler was welcomed as the new Co-Chair along with Martin deRosario. Apologies were received from Pete Middleton and Jean Lineker.

2. **Minutes of the Last Meeting and Matters Arising**

There were two amendments to the minutes

Carers presentation – Rashmi added that he was a former carer and support was available with 2 groups, 1 based in Northampton for the West and 1 in Wellingborough for the North. They had monthly meet ups for coffee and a support line giving people the opportunity to talk with others who understood their situation. Northamptonshire Carers West - [Horizons Group West, Former Carers Group | Northamptonshire Carers Association \(northamptonshire-carers.org\)](#)
Northamptonshire Carers – North - [Horizons Group North, Former Carers Group | Northamptonshire Carers Association \(northamptonshire-carers.org\)](#)

NCF funding - Rashmi asked for consideration be given to organizations with repeat project application grant, especially the Black Community whom had been affected the more by Covid19.

3. **Independent Advisory Group**

Unfortunately there was no one to lead on this item. Sgt Steve Bedford had now retired and we were waiting to be informed of his successor.

4. **Northamptonshire Fire Service**

Ashley Tugby from the Fire and Rescue Service explained that they were very keen to make connections with the harder to reach communities and would be appreciative of any contacts. They were known as responders to incidents and accidents but

wanted to be more proactive and help prevent them in the first place and did a lot of safety and accident prevention work.

Recruitment of full time officers did not happen that often. They were very keen that the service was more diverse and represented the community. They were making the selection process fair to everyone. Everyone could apply and, if they passed the initial physical and mental agility tests, they would be able to progress to the next stage. Ashley shared the story of a colleague with a prosthetic leg who could do the physical test quicker than Ashley could!

There were also paid on-call positions in stations in more remote locations. There was a national shortage of on-call firefighters but Northamptonshire had been quite successful recruiting 8 new officers, 2 of whom were female.

A new Wellbeing Team was in place to support people whether that was from the fall out of an incident they had worked at or other issues.

Ashely stated that when he had applied back in 2000 there were about 2,000 applicants for about 10 jobs, now there were around 600. He thought the Pension and/or the pay may not be quite so attractive as it had been but it was still a really, really good job. He explained that when Covid hit he was tasked with putting processes in place around supporting EMAS (East Mids Ambulance Service) with drivers and also ensuring everyone had sufficient PPE – it was different to his core role, but one that his individual skills allowed him to excel in. They also, of course, had staff members in various roles in addition to the responders.

Graeme stated he would be keen to talk to Ashley about scoping out a pilot project – Fire & Fitness – getting people more active, learning about fire and increasing employability. Action: Debbie do email introduction. Ashley stated he would be interested once the Covid situation had settle down and informed the group that they also had Emergency Cadets which was useful in getting young people interested in the service.

Rashmi asked about the current stats around staff diversity and also about home fire safety visits. Ashley did not have figures to hand but stated that about 12% were female. They were building up relations with more diverse communities but as the job was deemed as high risk it was not always very attractive. However, he did state that they were risk averse as staff safety was paramount and they did not usually lose fire fighters. They were not sent into an empty burning building but would just fight the fire externally. However, if there was someone in the building, they would be doing all they could to get that person out. Not all countries took this approach though. Home fire safety checks were generally done on request or if in response to a fire in a particular street, they would then visit other properties in that street. Fire alarms would be fitted as it was proven they helped save lives, but it was about more than that. There would be further education depending on what they saw in the property. If hoarding was evident they would be passed over to a team who gave specialist support.

Jatish stated he used to work for Highways and was closely connected to the Fire Station at Mereway and they had done a lot of work with schools. This was one of the joys of his job.

5. **Perinatal and Maternal Mental Health Services**

Carly introduced the Perinatal and Maternal Mental Health Service. It has been existence for 3 years, the team growing from 2 to 35 staff over the years.

- 20% of women experience mental health conditions during pregnancy and/or after birth from mild, which generally resolved by itself, to severe. This could be anything up to 12 months after the birth.
- 20% risk of mental health issues during pregnancy is higher than physical risk.
- The service work with moderate to severe cases.
- During pregnancy up to 2 years old is the most important time for an infant's development. Infant brain development will be affected by how the mother is.
- Any woman who has had previous experience of mental health issues has a 90% chance of a relapse.
- Midwife will be asking specific questions on mental health history to find out the best place to signpost each individual.
- Approximately 10% of partners of women who were referred also suffered poor mental health during pregnancy and after the birth. More awareness raising was required.

NHFT were in the process of training and employing mental health peer support workers in a lot of areas of mental health. There was a lot of value in this and they were keen to reach out to communities and increasing diversity as a lot of women from various cultures were experiencing mental health issues and not reaching out for support.

Rashmi stated that organisations often make statements of reaching out to communities and wanting voluntary groups to get involved but did not have the finance in place to progress. Carly acknowledged this had been raised before but had been done in other areas.

Graeme suggested linking with Send4Dads Action: Debbie to do email introduction. Also that they could work together to help keep people active with a young child.

There was also a new part of the service for groups that did not fit who had lost a baby through miscarriage or still birth, or who had experienced birth trauma, providing psychological support.

6. **Action for Happiness - what is available**

Laura Graham explained the Action for Happiness concept. There were 10 keys to follow to help create a happier world. It had been set up 10 years ago based on science to help people understand how to live happier lives, and was now international with the Dalai Lama as a Patron. It was not expected that everyone

would do everything every day, but to do at least one was the basis to a happier life. Nor was it designed to pretend that bad things very happened.

The 10 keys for happier living, which spelt out GREAT DREAM are:

GIVING – Do things for others
RELATING – Connect with people
EXERCISING – Take care of your body
AWARENESS – Live life mindfully
TRYING OUT – Keep learning new things

DIRECTION – Have goals to look forward to
RESILIENCE – Find ways to bounce back
EMOTIONS – Look for what's good
ACCEPTANCE – Be comfortable with who you are
MEANING – Be part of something bigger

An electronic calendar was produced every month – access them here - [Action for Happiness](#) or use the link on our newsletter.

Currently most things were only available online as the they did not have physical locations. There were some books available but they came with a cost.

Cllr Chantler asked if everything was online as many of his residents did not have access to the internet and Rashmi stated that, as being visually impaired, he had difficulties with online material as it was not always compatible with his software and he benefitted a lot more from face to face activities. Laura responded that Public Health had funded for 4 locations for actual Happy Cafes where people could access resources and face to face events. Then Covid had hit so this was reduced to online only. The 4 organisations were Umbrella Fair (Racecourse), Zim Women, United African Association and Heather's Café in Kingsley. Heather's Café hope to start some small scale face to face meetings soon. However, as an organisation they had been one of the first to stop face to face interactions and were likely to be one of the last to start again. Jatish stated that he had been going to that cafe for a long time had always received a warm welcome and would recommend it to everyone.

Connections had been made to minority groups to help spread the word. Although the funding had only stretched to 4 organisations they wanted to reach out to as many as possible and would welcome involvement.

Graeme stated it was very good to see that exercise was included and they were linked with MIND crises cafes. Laura stated the Happy Cafes were not designed for crises but they were being proactive and had a well-being programme set up at Delapre Abbey funded by the Thriving Communities Fund.

Rashmi expressed interest and asked to be put in touch with Laura Action: Debbie to do email intro.

7. **International Day of People with Disabilities Event Planning**

Agreed to plan with the Council's Staff Disability Network and the North Disabled People's Forum for a virtual event. This year's theme was not yet known.

8. **Community Information Exchange**

Kit – There were a couple of opportunities through NHFT:-

1. Cadets – a year round programme with sessions once a week during school term time for young people aged 14 – 18 from groups who have not traditionally entered into volunteering opportunities within the health sector including those with learning difficulties or disabilities (full details have been sent out separately).
2. Peer support programme – providing training for those with lived experience. The advert will go live in September for the next round in January. This training will prepare people for paid positions although there is no promise of a job. Consideration will also be given as to whether this is the right time for the person themselves.

Rashmi asked, for those with disabilities who were on benefits, whether the money could be paid to the organisation that they represented. Action: Kit to enquire.

Kit and her colleague Kirstie would be presenting on the Peer Support worker and Volunteer to Career programmes at the next meeting.

Cllr Chantler – One thing he had picked up from his first meeting was the Council needed to find better ways of communicating. However, he asked everyone to be patient as it was a new organisation. He also asked people to get in touch if there was anything they thought needed more attention within the Council.

Graeme – hoped everyone had enjoyed the successful Olympics especially with athletes from the county winning medals. He always thought of it as the warm up to the real event of the Paralympics. There were now 5 athletes from Northamptonshire competing with swimmers Zara Mullooly and William Perry joining fellow swimmers Ellie Robinson and Maisie Summers-Newton along with wheelchair tennis player Dermot Bailey in Tokyo.

Funding was available for the Couch to Coach Scheme and he reminded everyone that there were ample opportunities across the county to try most sports. Ashley stated he had been to Sail-ability at Pitsford Reservoir and could report that it was excellent!

Alex – Funding opportunities currently available included:-

Family Food Aid

Made by Sport

The Constance Travis Endowment Fund

Northamptonshire Sport Disability Fund

More details on all grants can be found here -[Northamptonshire Community Foundation \(ncf.uk.com\)](https://www.ncf.uk.com)

New funds for the autumn included one specifically for CICs and CIOs (Community Interest Companies and Organisations) and the next round of the Anglia Water Fund.

Alex explained that the Foundation was a middle man between the donor and the applicants and worked with all types of donors who all had their own criteria of

what they wanted to target which they took on board but also tried to align it with community needs. Processes were in place for auditing and applicants had to sign an agreement to produce an end of grant report before the funds were released. However, if anyone had concerns that any grants administered by NCF were not being used appropriately, they should get in touch.

A point was made that organisations representing should make an effort of promoting disabled people to attend and was backed up by a member suggesting when presenting, bring along disabled person to carry out the presentation if possible

9. **Any Other Business**

Dates/Times/Day of week for 2022 meetings – meetings are currently on Friday's at 11am. Members are asked for their preference for next year's meetings. It is hope that we will be able to have the option of attending the Guildhall in person as well as via Teams although this has yet to be confirmed. If you have a preference as please let Debbie know – Debbie.Maccoll@westnorthants.gov.uk

10. **Items for Next Meeting**

NHFT Peer Support and Volunteer to Career programmes
Voi Scooters
Blue Badge

11. **Date of Next meeting**

11am Friday 8 October 2021 by Teams