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| **Meeting of the Working Carers Employers Forum 18 July 2018**  Held at  Direct Line Group  Leeds | **Z:\Admin Carers Leeds\A OPERATIONAL\Working Carers Dementia Project 2016\SUPPORTING_WORKING_CARERS_LOGO.jpg** |

**Summary of Discussion**

Present

Helen Smith St Gemmas Hospice

Becky Smith NHS England

Madlen Sayar Carers Leeds

Val Hewison Carers Leeds

Andrew Walsh Carers Leeds

Carrie Grey Carers Leeds

Ian Brooke Mawson Leeds CC

Tom Gaffney British Gas

Stephanie Turner British Gas

Sarah Sutherland University of Leeds

Nabila Ayub Leeds Beckett University

Russell Thomas Direct Line Group

John Bradfield West Yorkshire Police

Paul Morrin NHS Trust (Leeds Community Healthcare)

Helen Saunders Clarion Solicitors

Gillian Storm DWF

Camilla Reese DWF

Val fed back to the meeting about a successful **Carers Week** in Leeds where working carers were in the spotlight. The Yorkshire Evening Post article was circulated to the meeting.

Ian outlined progress with the **Leeds Commitment to Carers** initiative and members of the Forum were encouraged to sign up via the Leeds City Council website, or via Carers Leeds.

Andrew confirmed that the **Carers Leeds Advice Line** is now open until 6:30pm on Wednesdays, and this will hopefully allow working carers to be able to access our services outside their normal working hours.

Attendees at the meeting discussed their own progress in supporting working carers at work. There was a good range of initiatives, challenges and successes, it was felt important that members feel able to learn from each other. People agreed that email addresses will be freely available within the Forum and members are able to contact each other at any time. Andrew confirmed that when the next notice is sent to Forum members all the email addresses will be shown at the top of the email.

**The Carers Leeds Working Carers Package** for employers had now been finalised and was available on the Carers Leeds Website, Working Carers pages. A one page summary version of the Package had been produced and copies of this were distributed at the meeting.

Madlen and Carrie updated the Forum on **one to ones with working carers**. Having started with the University of Leeds, other Forum members were now taking up this option. The initial approach from employers for this service should be made via Madlen at Carers Leeds.

Val and Andrew described the **training and presentations service** for employers for their managers and leaders. This was part of the service to help employers raise awareness for managers of the value of supporting working carers.

Andrew gave an update on the progress towards creating a useful, informative and easily accessible **on line Toolkit for employers**. This was now part of the Carers Leeds website and the working carers team were now developing the website in line with the needs of employers. It was the aim to have the core Toolkit with a wide variety of links to information and support for employers. More information and updates about the Carers Leeds working carers website pages would be circulated to Forum members shortly.

**The digital offering** to employers and working carers via Leeds City Council was outlined by Ian. All carers are able to access the national Carers UK digital support package free of charge. The relevant access codes were distributed at the meeting. Ian also confirmed that Carers Leeds are an umbrella organisation for the Council, offing the Carers UK digital employers package (Employers for Carers) free to employers in Leeds with fewer than 250 employees.

The meeting discussed the **Self Assessment for employers** to see how supportive they were to working carers. Hard copies were distributed at the meeting and members were asked to complete them and give feedback to the Working Carers team. The Self Assessment was being finalised on line using an interactive programme on the Carers Leeds website. More details of this would be circulated shortly.

Andrew explained how Carers Leeds was planning to demonstrate **successful outcomes of supporting working carers**. This could be for instance written case studies, videos, social media items, blogs or testimonies from employers. These will be located on the Carers Leeds website, working carers pages. He asked that Forum members look at their own successes, and where they feel appropriate send these through to Carers Leeds to share with others.

The meeting then discussed a range of experiences with working carers around a number of themes:

**Why does our organisation buy in to supporting working carers**

**How do we convince senior leaders of the importance of supporting working carers**

The discussion included:

* Our leaders really get the link between keeping the best employers and the need to support them when they are carers
* Its important to help leaders understand ”What’s in it for me/the business” when supporting working carers
* Some members said that supporting working carers is a key part of the health and wellbeing agenda
* Some said that the profile of working carers was being raised as part of the Mindful Employer movement – leaders were becoming increasingly aware of the business benefits of caring for the health and wellbeing of the workforce.
* Some use the HR route, setting out the business reasons why supporting working carers is important
* Awareness training for leaders was seen by some as the key to gaining buy in
* Some said that gaining a Champion for working carers at a senior level was a good way to convince other leaders
* Some said that where leaders themselves are, or become carers, this is a great help to gaining leadership support to working carers issues
* Everyone agreed that they are more likely to gain buy in from the top if they can give evidence of the success of supporting working carers.

**How do we ensure that our managers understand what support the organisation offers our working carers**

* A range of generic communication tools for managers eg via intranets
* Specific training for managers on the policies of the organisations which relate to working carers support.
* Use of on line carers hubs to ensure current policies are understood
* Building knowledge of carers policies into the performance management/competencies of managers, eg part of the appraisals

**How do we use working carers forums/networks**

* Several Forum members had or had had forums for working carers
* Some were specifically for working carers, others were more generic, eg wellbeing/disability forums.
* The key to these being successful was to establish at the outset what the purpose of the forum/network was.
* Examples included: to inform and give information, to discuss common issues, to gain the views of working carers on the policies and processes of the organisation, to exchange ideas for good practice etc.
* The forums needed to be strongly organised and coordinated if they were to be successful
* Often coordination of carers networks was the responsibility of 1 person. If he/she left the organisation the network could die
* Larger organisations found that virtual forums and networks, on line, were very effective.

Andrew thanked those who attended the meeting for their contribution, and also Direct Line Group for allowing us to use their premises for the meeting. The next meeting is on Thursday October 25th, 2-4pm.