

Working together for mental health

TeamWork

News and information for people with learning & work in mind

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The Workways Team

Workways is part of Devon Partnership NHS Trust's Vocational Rehabilitation Service and managed by Christine Wardle.

The Team comprises Vocational Advisors, Vocational Coaches and Administration staff. The Advisors and Coaches come from a variety of health and non-health backgrounds. These include Occupational Therapists and staff who have experience of helping people find and remain in employment, education, training and voluntary work.

Useful Numbers

BelInvolved Devon	201218
Connexions	203603
Citizens Advice Bureau	0844 4994101
Council Tax & Housing Benefits	265440
Exeter College	205222
Exeter Volunteer Centre	202055
First Step Project	202055
Jobcentre Plus	473916
MIND Exeter & East Devon	204499
Nextstep	0845 8 50 50 70
New Leaf	823720
Patient Advice & Liaison Services	402093
PLUSS	0800 91 777 92
Recovery & Independent Living	208900
Rethink	01395 224166
St Loye's Foundation	255428
WorkWAYS	677050

All prefixed by 01392 unless shown

Dates for your diary

- Workways Support Group – 16th Aug, 12th Sept
- World Mental Health Day – 10th October

Places still available for the following:

- Benefits Overview session – 29th Sept
- Mental Health First Aid – 13th & 14th Oct
- Being Mindful – 20th Oct or 9th Dec
- Mindful Workplaces – 9th Nov

If you are interested in any of the above, please contact us on 01392 677050.

Read *TeamWork* online at:

www.workways.org.uk

Being on the Other Side – a Personal Experience

My story of my own mental health is not unlike any others that suffer the invisible onset of this condition, which many call an illness. I call it a condition that is caused by outside factors beyond our control.

In my case, my condition began in 2002 when I moved with my family down to Devon. Although moving is said to be stressful, in my situation it was the work and the environment that triggered the depression.

Having never suffered from depression before, I found that the working environment along with individuals who were more interested in statistics than people, were the main cause. The end result was constant bullying, harassment, and warnings about how slow I was and how questioning my abilities. One example was being led off to the manager's room and torn to shreds reducing me to tears in earshot and eyeshot of the office.

Thus started a spell of depression that continued on and off with brief spells of work returns and failures. I found another job, but found the same problem, speed and results from my work.

One day just out of the blue I decided to not go into work and began my current spell of depression. There were no warning signs as far I knew, but there was a sense of "Thank God, I am not going into work again".

I had some counselling from my employer, changed my Doctor and then approached Workways in Exeter and found that they gave me some initial support and help in speaking to others like me.

My employer decided to terminate my contract upon health grounds and this came as no shock, in fact it was a relief.

Over the next few months the depression became worse and at times, I self harmed myself and considered suicide. So feeling trapped and isolated more and more, I decided to make a few decisions.

Firstly I decided to plan ahead and find a job and I searched all the job websites each day of the week and newspapers.

During this time I was on Employment Support Allowance and then found fit for work. So I switched over to Jobseekers Allowance where I would have to attend the local Jobcentre Plus to register and qualify for the allowance.

This brought more stress and delay, but I kept on looking for a job and eventually after a long dull period over Christmas 2009, I began getting interviews. All in all I applied for over 150 jobs in an 18 month period. I then applied to the NHS for an apprenticeship administrator role and was successful in July 2010 and am now working.

I am not saying I am cured, I do still have those spells of uncertainty, despair and isolation and I am still on medication to control my condition. Without my CPN, East Devon Volunteer Support Group, Workways, and friends and family I would not be here today.

Bill Johnson

Raising Awareness

In times of economic recession and public sector spending reductions, it's really important that businesses and organisations protect their training budget – as hard as that may be amidst every other demand.

Increased awareness and knowledge about how to support people experiencing stress, anxiety, depression and other mental health conditions is crucial not just for employees, a business' most important asset, but also for the way organisations help their customers.

Here at Workways we offer a range of mental health awareness sessions:

Being Mindful focuses on practice not policies and works best with participants from a mixture of roles and disciplines – for example, line managers and frontline staff, especially those with little or no knowledge of mental health issues. This 3-hour session provides an introduction to the signs and symptoms of mental health conditions, the support available and how to help people in distress. It also covers reasonable adjustments, absence management and supporting staff in work.

A Mindful Workplace Without a mentally healthy workplace, the team will experience low morale, people will become cynical, stressed and anxious; physical health problems will increase, sickness levels will rise, productivity will drop and organisational reputations will be badly affected. A mentally healthy workplace is one which is seen as a happy and friendly place to work, values individual and team creativity and new ideas, has high productivity levels and is efficient, and is open to discussions about mental health issues. They give real consideration of work/life balance, provide staff with a sense of control over their own work, are good at communication, and manage change well. Also lasting 3 hours, this session looks at what a mentally healthy workplace means for organisations, the topic of motivation and individual and organisational issues which affect the wellbeing of staff.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is the help given to someone experiencing a mental health problem before professional help is obtained. The aims are: to preserve life where a person may be a danger to themselves or others; to provide help to prevent the mental health problems developing into a more serious state; to promote the recovery of good mental health; and to provide comfort to a person experiencing a mental health problem. Mental Health First Aid does not teach people to be therapists. However, it does teach people how to recognise the symptoms of mental health problems, how to provide initial help and how to guide a person towards appropriate professional help. MHFA is a two-day course.

Benefits Overview provides a half-day introduction to the UK benefits and tax credit system. This often complicated area can cause confusion for people who use mental health services, advisors and health professionals alike. This session will dispel some of the myths and provide information on what can be claimed, in which situation, and how and where to claim them.

All the above sessions are run at Workways (dates shown on the front page of this edition of *TeamWork*) and can also be delivered on your premises – for more details visit www.workways.org.uk

The Workways Support Group

The Workways Support Group offers a safe environment for individuals to come and share their experiences. It also provides opportunity to gain information on a variety of subjects through guest speakers and opportunity to borrow books which the group own.

We have a number of interesting books available for people to borrow at the Support Group meetings, including self-help books, personal recovery stories and information books about mental health and wellbeing.

Anyone who is using, or has used, the Workways service is welcome to attend the group. The group meets at Workways on the 2nd Monday of every month – the next meeting will be on **Monday 16th August 2010** and then again on **Monday 12th September**.

If you would like any further information about the Support Group then contact Becky or Cathie at Workways on 01392 677050.

If you have any ideas or feedback regarding *TeamWork*, please do get in touch:

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Fax: 01392 677079

Email: info@workways.org.uk

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Do you provide information, advice, training or support to people with mental health issues, employers or learning and work organisations?

You can advertise your service to our readership of over 1200 learning and work organisations, employers, social care and health professionals and also on the Internet.

An advert costs just £25 inc VAT per edition.

Workways is a service of Devon Partnership NHS Trust
Working in partnership with



Promoting mental health through learning and work