

## **BOLTON ADULT AUTISM SUPPORT**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MARCH 29<sup>th</sup> 2017 AT THICKETFORD CARE AND COMMUNITY CENTRE**

#### **Item No.**

#### **1. Welcome and apologies for absence**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting especially our guest speaker Penny Applegate and members of her team. Additionally, he said he was delighted to introduce our new Hon. Treasurer, Anna Polichnowska to her first meeting. Members gave Anna a very warm welcome. Apologies were received from Debbie Newell, Helen Green, Alison Thompson, Elaine Birch, Yvonne Poulson and Eira Heywood. There were 6 members in attendance and four guests present.

#### **2. Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday February 22<sup>nd</sup> 2017**

The minutes of the above meeting were agreed as a correct record

#### **3. Matters arising from the above minutes**

The Chairman referred to item 6 of the minutes regarding the Befriending service and confirmed that all applications for funding of a post of Volunteers' Co-ordinator had been unsuccessful and that such would be pursued at a later date.

#### **4. Address by Penny Applegate and colleagues**

Penny spoke first about her team's role in supporting people with disabilities (including ASCs) in the work place and emphasised the one to one approach with mentoring and close liaison with employers. This support included help with job applications and personal support at interviews. Special employment support was available for people with special needs. Organisations with whom the DWP worked included Shaw Trust; Remploy (as intermediary) and COMCO based in Halliwell Road Bolton. Members welcomed the news of the person centred and 1-1 approach. Members felt that their own experiences and that of their family members would have been less worrying and traumatic had they experienced the level of support that was now available.

Penny and her team then went on to discuss changes to the benefits system, highlighting the following:

- replacement of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) by Personal Independence Payments (PIP) neither of which are means tested but in regard to PIP, the 'qualifying bar' is set much higher in regard to mobility allowance and personal care. It was likely therefore, that many people, once moved to PIP would lose the mobility element previously provided by DLA.
- employment support allowance is to be replaced by Universal Credit; this being a full benefits service.

Members took the opportunity to relate their personal experiences of moving from DLA to PIP and many emphasised the difficulty of understanding the new regimes. A number of questions were answered by Penny and her team and it was agreed by all present that the benefits system was a 'minefield' for families.

At the conclusion of the question and answer session, the Chairman and members thanked Penny and her colleagues for a most informative presentation.

## **5. Chairman's report**

- i) The Chairman reported on the Bolton Vision Conference Update recently held and at which the Council committed to pursue an Autism Friendly Town Status for Bolton. He said that this was a most welcome and exciting development and said that he would be chairing a sub-group of the Autism Partnership Board in late April before the next main meeting of the APB.
- ii) The Chairman gave feedback on the most recent meeting of the Independent Advisory Group (IAG) that had dealt mainly with the problems facing the police regarding the growth in terrorism. Additionally, time was spent reviewing the ongoing procedure for recruitment of new members and particularly reviewing the documents sent to potential new recruits.

## **6. Vice Chair's report**

The Vice Chair circulated a report to members, summarising the proceedings of the **Health and Well-being Forum** meeting she attended on March 15<sup>th</sup> 2017 at The Hub.

The Vice-Chair also gave feedback by way of a written report regarding a meeting she had had with David Ramsbottom of ASC Healthcare, Breightmet on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2017 to review updates required to the BAAS website. She hoped that all the required changes/updates would be made over the next couple of weeks. The Chairman added that both he and the Vice-Chair were keen to make the website more user friendly and more interactive. The Chairman thanked the Vice-Chair for her comprehensive reports.

## **7. AOB**

The Chairman reported he would be submitting a grant application for cares trips for 2017 and asked members to let him know of any venues they might wish him to consider.

Finally, the Chairman confirmed that the grant for the Befriending service (volunteers and office consumables element) had been confirmed by Awards4All and the monies would be paid into the BAAS account in the near future. It was his intention that we proceed with the recruitment of volunteers and to garner experience over time to demonstrate the need for a Co-ordinator with further applications to appropriate organisations. Members agreed to proceed on the basis now outlined.

## **8. Date/s of next meeting/s**

Monthly meeting Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2017

Drop-in session 29<sup>th</sup> April 2017