**Minutes – Northern Rehab Forum (NRF)**

**Meeting held on Monday 20/02/2017**

**Attendees:**

Martin Kearney (MK) – Newcastle City Council

Vikki Harris-Merrick (VH) – Newcastle City Council

Philip Simpson (PS) – Cheshire East Council

Daniella McCluskey (DM) – Durham County Council

Cara Turnbull (CT) – Durham County Council

David Johnston (DJ) – Durham County Council

Michael Sutton (MS) – Sight Services

Avril Elder (AE) – Guide Dogs

Jim Halsall (JH) – Durham County Council

Paul Wilds (PW) – BID Northumberland

Rebecca Jessop (RJ) – Student BID Northumberland

Dawn Ferguson (DF) – Sight Services

**Apologies:**

David Waterfall-Brown – Guide Dogs

Karen Fewtrell – Guide Dogs

Richard Richardson – Durham County Council

Michael Shaw – Sight Services

Jane Connor – Cumbria

Jill James – Blind Veterans UK

**Agenda Items**

**Matters arising from minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes from the last meeting on 20/01/2016 were agreed as a true account.

**Psychological and Emotional impact of sight loss – Philip Simpson**

Philip Simpson facilitated a group discussion around the psychological and emotional impact of sight loss. This kind of loss has been likened to the grieving process, the group discussed how we relate this to our everyday involvement with our service users. Philip touched upon a number of models, such as:

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross Five stages of grief (see link below)

1. Denial
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Depression
5. Acceptance

<http://www.businessballs.com/elisabeth_kubler_ross_five_stages_of_grief.htm>

Wordens Four tasks or mourning (see link below)

1. Accept the reality of the loss
2. To work through the pain of grief
3. To adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing
4. To find an enduring connection with the deceased while embarking on a new life

<http://www.whatsyourgrief.com/wordens-four-tasks-of-mourning/>

The book ‘Living with Complicated Grief’ by Prof. Craig A. White is available to purchase on Amazon:

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Living-Complicated-Grief-Craig-White-x/dp/1847091504>

Group discussed lack of services to refer people with sight loss onto, and the importance of specialist counselling. Durham felt they had a good service that operates within the local Blind Society, Newcastle are currently without specialist counselling services as this was provided from within Newcastle Blind Society however Disability North take referrals for disability related counselling. Language and terminology used by Ophthalmology was generally deemed as unhelpful and demotivating and at times inhibited the role of the Rehabilitation worker. The group agreed more provision is needed to assist the Rehabilitation role. Possible communication needed with Head of Ophthalmology.

We thank Philip for his valuable contribution and hope this encourages others to take part in peer participation.

**Future peer participation**

Joshua Feehan (RNIB) is happy to attend a future NRF meeting to discuss peer participation. Simon Labbett (RWPN) and Joshua are attending the Sight Service Rehab Seminar on 23rd March. Vikki Harris-Merrick to facilitate group wheelchair practical and discussion on 22nd May in Durham.

Hopefully there will be attendance in May from Blind Veterans UK to update us on their restructure and services they are offering. Related information is that Jill James is moving to North Yorkshire, Congratulations to her on her new role with Blind Veterans UK.

**Continuous Professional Development**

**Training opportunities in the North East of England**

The group felt there is not enough training being delivered in the North East and so the group would like to put this forward to RWPN. David suggested that if we desire we could pool resources together and requisition our own local training hosted by any member.

**ACTION: V H-M to contact Andy Fisher about possible low vision and advanced mobility training**

**Complex O&M cases**

The criteria to receive a wheelchair currently stands with a sight test and the same principles apply as it does for DVLA criteria (6/9). VH-M explained that this is currently being discussed with management of Newcastle Wheelchair Services in the hope that this strict criteria can be negotiated and will in future promote partnership working following a joint referral to wheelchair services and rehabilitation services where the person can be encouraged to take up wheelchair mobility from a vision impairment rehab worker before declining the possibility of a wheelchair. This is still being negotiated.

This brought the group on to a discussion around the need for training in this area. The group agreed to pool knowledge and have a practical session involving any equipment that members feel would be beneficial. It was pointed out this will not be a formal training session and only knowledge that has proven to be safe and worked well for others will be shared. This will be discussed throughout the session. This is planned for May, Durham to host.

**Technology & Info Sound**

Michael Sutton discussed Durham Reading and Exploration Training (DREX) and a leaflet was distributed

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/psychology/research/drex/>

<https://apps.dur.ac.uk/drex/app/>

This is an online reading improvement program for people with partial sight loss run by Durham University. MS also added that if we would like a presentation at one of our meeting from the Ophthalmologist who has been involved with this program then he will arrange this.

**ACTION: MS to contact Ophthalmology and DREX to arrange.**

**Info Sound**

Info Sound is an independent registered charity that produces and distributes free and impartial news and information, in audio, for the benefit of vision-impaired (that is, blind and partially-sighted) people across Great Britain. We are a non-commercial, apolitical and editorially-impartial public service, funded solely by voluntary donation.

<http://www.infosound.org.uk/>

RWPN has arranged on-line technology training which will be rolled out on 2nd March for Rehabilitation workers. This course is now full however future dates may be provided depending on demand.

**ACTION: PS to discuss with Richard Gillman the possibility of providing a PM session (Technology and app training) on 22nd May in Durham for the group. This will make the Rehab Form meeting a full day.**

**Sharing good practice**

Case study discussion held; this was well contributed by professionals round the table. Information which was added will not be added to the minutes due to confidentiality. We covered subjects like safe working practice, service user family dynamics and emotional and psychological impact of sight loss, knowing our own limitations and when to refer on to other professionals.

**RWPN updates**

**Annual Seminar**

MK advised us of the annual seminar which is being held at BCU on 9th June 2017.

**Training opportunities**

CPD can now be uploaded from 1st January 2017, this appears to be a relatively easy process.

In terms of CPD training events, members are given priority, RWPN encourage membership and to read more about the benefits of registration see the link below:

<https://rehabilitationworkers.wildapricot.org/whyjoin>

RWPN are a very supportive network for employment related advice, job advertisements as well as being able to tap into special interest groups.

MK advised us about the tech training previously discussed, advanced mobility and trailblazer apprenticeship scheme. MK was unable to attend the last RWPN update due to his fundraising activities however further discussion will be held at the Sight Services Rehab seminar on 23rd March.

**Permission to place minutes on RWPN web page / Facebook**

This was agreed and minutes will be shared.

**Date of Next Meeting**

Monday 22nd May 2017 at 10am at Durham County Hall.