

Mind in Harrow

Mental Health Information & Advocacy Coordinator Background paper

Introduction

The Mental Health Information & Advocacy Coordinator offers a specialist approach to promote wellbeing and prevention with Harrow residents experiencing mental health problems and their carers in partnership with local charities across two projects:

1) Care Act 2014 Information & Advice service: SWISH (the Support & Wellbeing Information Service Harrow)

The postholder will offer a specialist mental health information service through a range of communication channels. They will coordinate with Care Act Information & Advice Service partners to offer a seamless client journey and high quality, person-centred and timely interventions. They will also offer 1:1 outreach to carers of people experiencing mental health problems, offering support and help to overcome a variety of cultural, practical and health barriers.

2) Peer Advocacy service: On Your Side

The postholder will coordinate specialist mental health Peer Advocacy for Harrow residents experiencing multiple barriers to accessing support, to enable them to navigate the welfare and mental health systems.

Mind in Harrow

Mind in Harrow is a leading mental health charity based in NW London. We have an excellent reputation and our dynamic and creative team of 40 full & part-time staff and 100 volunteers is driven by a strong user empowerment ethos. Mind in Harrow is an independent charity and company limited by guarantee, and is affiliated to national Mind, working closely with local Mind associations across West London and the wider London network.

We deliver 10 holistic community-led services including:

Therapeutic Support - our 10-year established Talking Therapies Service supports 2,500 people pa experiencing mild to moderate mental health problems including anxiety and depression;

Improved Well-being - our 25 year flagship Befriending Project engages Harrow's most vulnerable to better mental health; our Stepping Stones Courses supports 180 people pa towards mainstream life by a mix of on-trend courses; and our unique HeadsUp Project helps hundreds of young people every year to improved emotional resilience;

BAME/Peer Involvement - Harrow User Group (HUG) is one of England's largest (600-strong) and most active service user peer-led groups. We run England's only Somali Advocacy Project, Hayaan, and EKTA – tackling mental health stigma and isolation for Harrow's South Asian community since 2010.

Mind in Harrow's **helpline** (and new online chat) is Harrow's only specialist mental health information service, with a proven track record of providing early access to help and improving capacity to cope. The Mental Health Helpline (Mon-Fri 9-5) is supported by our award-winning online Mental Health Directory managing 8000+ contacts pa. Since 2015 the helpline has been an integral part of the SWISH Information Service.

SWISH Information Service – Your role

The Care Act 2014 imparts a number of key responsibilities onto Local Councils and related partners; one of these includes a responsibility to *‘establish and maintain a service for providing people in its area with information and advice relating to care and support for adults and support for carers’*. The responsibility is a universal, and the service needs to provide quality information and advice to the highest possible standard.

Mind in Harrow is the lead partner, under the umbrella of a local voluntary sector consortium called Harrow Community Action, for delivery of the Harrow Care Act 2014 Information & Advice Service. The consortium includes four other specialist partners each leading on their own area: Age UK Harrow Hillingdon & Brent, Harrow Association of Disabled People (HAD), Harrow Mencap, and Harrow Carers.

The SWISH information service helps over 25,000 Harrow residents each year to find support and improved wellbeing through a variety of channels (telephone helpline, email, events, circulated bulletins, 1:1 casework and web-based with social media). Mind in Harrow offers a specialist mental health information service and, as the lead partner, acts as the single point of access for any general enquiries and coordinates internal referral to the service partners. Our telephone helpline is provided by trained volunteers, supported by staff, and we offer an online directory, which is kept up-to-date by a specialist worker 1 day per week.

The Mental Health Information & Advocacy Coordinator is responsible for delivering Mind in Harrow’s mental health information service. They provide specialist one-off information to callers, offer casework support for those with more complex needs, and coordinate with the On Your Side service or support managed referrals to other external services as appropriate. They coordinate with SWISH delivery partners and are responsible for recruiting training and supporting the team of information volunteers and for providing specialist information support to Mind in Harrow’s wider staff team. The Mental Health Information & Advocacy Coordinator will also contribute to the development of the wider SWISH service through outreach, consultation, networking, and promotion activities.

On Your Side peer advocacy project - Your role

On Your Side is Mind in Harrow’s pioneering ‘volunteer peer advocacy’ project aiming to empower 65 adults pa with enduring mental health problems to overcome barriers at a time of crisis or critical moment, and to support their recovery journey through the mental health or welfare systems, improving both their ability to cope and their mental health. The project focusses on those most vulnerable & marginalised without access to other support, and up to 75% of participants will be from Harrow’s 69%-strong BAMER communities.

The Mental Health Information & Advocacy Coordinator is responsible for delivering the On Your Side peer advocacy service. They recruit, train, and support a team of Volunteer Peer Advocates who work flexibly alongside people experiencing multiple-disadvantage and disproportionate mental ill health, empowering them to understand their rights and make informed choices. The Mental Health Information & Advocacy



Coordinator matches referrals for peer advocacy to trained peer volunteers, and supports them to navigate their way through the health/social-care/welfare system to achieve their goal to create enduring and sustainable improvements in their circumstances.

Funding

The Care Act SWISH information service is funded by Harrow Council, and the On Your Side peer advocacy service is funded by the Henry Smith Charity until June 2024.