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Heads-Up

This **customer newsletter** is the place to find out what's going on at Look Ahead

Annual Customer Celebration success!

On Wednesday 20th September, over 130 Look Ahead customers, volunteers and staff came together for our annual Customer Celebration.

This is a special event in our calendar that celebrates some of the fantastic things that customers have achieved over the past 12 months. This year we held the event at Coin Street Community Builders, near Waterloo in central London.

As part of the day, we welcomed Clare Canning from the Touch network in Southampton. (You can find out more about Clare's story and the Touch Network on page three). As well as Clare, we also had performances from two customers from one of our services in Lambeth: Jason kicked off the event with some of his original guitar music and Kwame got the audience up and singing with his rap music in the afternoon.

During the event, customers were given the chance to try something new in our three interactive workshops. These workshops focused on creativity and customers could choose between:

- **Sound relaxation** – customers were guided through a mindfulness session by Marco and his use of sound to encouraged customers to switch off from what is going on around them.
- **Mask making** – this session gave customers the chance to express their artistic side and decorate a mask to represent how they want others to see them.
- **Circus skills** – In this session customers were able to try their hand at some basic circus skills including juggling, plate spinning and much more!

For many people, the highlight of the day was our 2017 Customer Awards. **Turn the page to find out more and to see the full list of our winners.**



And the winner is... 2017 Customer Awards

Every customer invited to attend our Customer Celebration Event had been nominated for an award by their Support Worker or another member of Look Ahead staff.

All of the nominations this year were so strong that our judging panel (made up of Look Ahead staff and former customers) had a tough time choosing the winners!

After much discussion, they managed to select a shortlist of three winners for each of the six categories and the overall winner was announced on the day.

Congratulations to all of our winners and thank you to everyone who attended this year's event!

Made a difference (locally)



Winner - Louise, Milton Keynes Young People

Shortlisted:

- **Steve**, Joe Richards House, Southwark
- **Richard**, Tower Hamlets Rehab

Made a difference (centrally)



Winner - Charlie, Southwark Accommodation Based Support (SABS)

Shortlisted:

- **Parimal**, Brent Mental Health and Sensory Needs
- **Daniel**, Flying Angel, Newham

Inspiration to others

Winner - Tracy, Tower Hamlets Community Intervention Service

Shortlisted:

- **Kwame**, Lambeth Integrated Fulfillment Team (LIFT)
- **Ashley**, Croydon Mental Health

Contribution to the community

Winner - Wai Ching, Old Ford Road, Tower Hamlets

Shortlisted:

- **Mohamed**, Bayham Street, Camden
- **Stephen**, Colebrook Road, Kent

I can and I will

Winner - Michelle, Southwark Bridge Road

Shortlisted:

- **Taryl**, David Barker House, Southwark
- **Fathema**, Campbell Road Young People, Tower Hamlets
- **Genevieve**, Amy Garvey House, Kensington and Chelsea

Kindness (helping others)

Winner - Suzanne, The Coninghams, Hammersmith and Fullham

Shortlisted:

- **Lisa**, Kent Services
- **Elliot**, Ealing Young People



2017 Exceptional Achievement Award

Abubakar,
Southwark Young People
Floating Support

Customer Services Committee update

Look Ahead's Customer Services Committee (a group of current and former customers) meets regularly to work with Look Ahead's Board Members on a range of important projects.

At the moment we are about to start looking at complaints and feedback. This is going to be a big project led by members of CSC. If you would like to get involved with this project please contact Beth by emailing csc@lookahead.org.uk or calling **0207 368 6972**.

All the members of CSC are offered a full programme of training and this programme is also open to anyone who is interested in joining. The training is free, but you must book in advance. All the training will be held in a central London location on the following dates.

• **Wednesday 11th October:**
Introduction to CSC (morning)
Lunch and bowling (afternoon)

• **Thursday 26th October:**
Committee skills

• **Thursday 2nd November:**
Presentation and communication skills

To book onto this training or find out more about joining the committee please contact Beth by emailing csc@lookahead.org.uk or calling **0207 368 6972**.



My journey with mental health

As part of our 2017 Customer Celebration event, we were joined by Clare Canning who works for the Touch Network, a not-for-profit organisation that celebrates real life stories and encourages people to share their stories as a way to overcome a challenge.

At the event, Clare spoke to customers about her own journey in learning to manage her mental health needs; here she shares some of that journey, as well as some tips on what she does to stay positive during difficult or stressful situations.

I have experienced challenges with my mental health since a young age. When I was 16 I was diagnosed with depression and after going through a number of big life changes (including my parent's divorce and being bullied at school) I was left feeling very isolated. One of the ways that I learnt to deal with these feelings was through self-harm.

I continued to struggle with self-harm and managing my mental health for many years but as I began my journey to recovery I received support from mental health services. As part of this support I was introduced to a mindfulness teacher. For me, the process of learning mindfulness and meditation helped me to reconnect with my body and taught me how to deal with feeling frightened or low. Learning about mindfulness helped me to realise that I wasn't the only person who was struggling with self-harm, but that there were

other ways that I could cope with these feelings and learn how to deal with them in a more positive way.

Mindfulness is now part of my everyday life and one of the key tools I use to maintain my mental wellbeing – whether this is when I have half an hour to meditate or just thirty seconds to practice some breathing exercises. I can easily fit the skills and techniques I have learned around my life.

If you are interested in giving mindfulness a go, here are some easy things you can try:

Breathing: If you are in a difficult situation take time to focus on your breathing and how it affects your body. Take several deep breaths and concentrate on what happens to each part of your body as you breathe in and then out. Another technique that can help if you are feeling under stress is to breathe out for longer than you breathe in. Try breathing in for five seconds and then breathing out for eight - ten seconds. Doing this a few times has been psychologically proven to calm people and help them to re-focus.

Eating: When we get busy or are feeling low it can be easy to take something like what we eat for granted, but taking time to look after what and how you are eating is very important. This isn't just about making healthy choices, but also paying attention to the smell and taste of your food, and the experience of eating can also be a great way to positively connect with your body and re-focus your mind.

Guided meditation: If you would like to give meditation a go, but find it difficult to focus in total silence then guided meditation can be a great way to get started. There are lots of guided meditation videos available for free on Youtube which give you different options to choose from. Just search for 'guided meditation' and then give a few different ones a go to see which works best for you.

Whatever techniques you decide to try, remember that the best way to try something new and stick to it is to make it part of your everyday routine. So rather than telling yourself to start spending an hour a day meditating, try to introduce mindfulness into what you already do – like practicing breathing whilst washing up or getting ready for bed.

2017 World Mental Health Day

World Mental Health Day is an annual event which is all about encouraging wider mental health awareness and fighting existing stigma.

To show our support for the day on 10th October, we spoke to staff and customers from across Look Ahead to find out what they do to look after their mental health. Here's what they told us.

- **I go out people watching** - Kalpesh, Customer Services Committee member
- **I go for a walk or drink some tea** - Constance, Business Development Team
- **Take deep breaths, go for a run, do some cooking** - Irmani, Senior Leadership Team
- **I play guitar and learn a new song or practice my chords, or I play PS4 games to focus my mind on someone else's story** - Charlie, Customer Services Committee member and Peer Support Volunteer
- **Go for a drive** - Wendy, Volunteer Manager
- **Go for a long walk in the park or meditate** - Yasmin, Quality Checker Champion
- **I write a long story** - Daniel, Experts by Experience Trainer
- **I try to go into a different environment, so if I've been inside I go outside for a walk** - Dominic, Customer Services Committee member
- **I manage my mental wellbeing by asking for help from colleagues, going to the gym after work and making use of my support network by meeting up and socialising with them** - Akinwale, Look Ahead Contract Manager
- **I like to go for a walk or socialise with my friends** - Parimal, Customer Services Committee member
- **I do crosswords, ride my bike or play some Adele** - Daniel, Customer Services Committee member

No matter how well we look after our wellbeing, everyone feels down or stressed occasionally but it is how we deal with those negative emotions and work through them that is the important thing.

As Stephen, Look Ahead customer and poet explained, for him, moments when he is feeling low can actually help him to be more creative:

“From the depths of despair, the flowers of my creativity grow. When I am at my lowest ebb I am at my most productive. My mental health does not define me, my strength and courage does”



For more information and resources on mindfulness and how to get started, please visit www.mindfulness.org

What's been going on across Look Ahead services?

It's been a busy few months for our services, with lots of summer events to make the most of the sunshine – and distract us all from the rain! Below you can see photos and updates from some of our services who invited their local communities to get to know more about their service in an open day.

Joe Richards House BBQ and open day.

On 25th August, Joe Richard House held their annual BBQ social event. It was a great day that brought together our customers, staff, ward councillors, and other local external agencies. The event featured global food and drinks, an art exhibition, Zumba dancing and other entertainment.



Community and Careers day in Southwark

On Wednesday 23rd August, the team at our Southwark Young People Floating Support Service held a community and careers day in their local community centre. The day included stalls from several different organisations including the Prince's Trust and the Southwark Wellbeing Hub, who spoke to our young customers about their different career options. A local restaurant provided tasty food for everyone at the event and there were also some fun games and activities for everyone to get involved with.



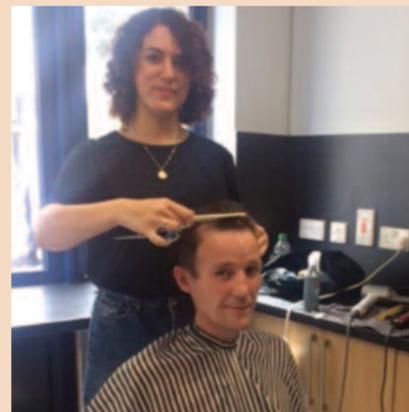
Eid Al Adha event at Milton Keynes Young People

In early September, staff and customers at our Milton Keynes Young People service came together to celebrate the Muslim holiday of Eid Al Adha. The day honours the willingness of Ibrahim (Abraham) to sacrifice his son, as an act of obedience to God's command. To mark the day, staff and customers in Milton Keynes organised a celebration of traditional food and invited their local Councillor Mohammad Khan and a local Imam who spoke to everyone about the importance of the day.



Haircuts for customers at Edward Alsop Court

At the beginning of August, a local stylist kindly volunteered to give free haircuts to customers at our Edward Alsop Court service in Westminster. The stylist, Claire saw 20 customers throughout the day, many of whom enjoyed the experience so much that they have asked the service to introduce a monthly hair care day!



Tower Hamlets football tournament

Earlier this summer, staff at our Tower Hamlets Rehab service organised a five-a-side football tournament that was open to all Look Ahead customers in East London. Teams from seven different services took part in the tournament with the team from our Tabard Service winning the day and the team from 298 Commercial Road coming second.

Customers and their family members were also invited to attend the event to cheer the teams on. They were also joined by the Mayor of Tower Hamlets who kindly presented the trophies at the end of the day. Thank you to everyone who was involved in organising such a successful day, and to Coventry Road for hosting the post-tournament BBQ!



The trophies for winners and best scorer and player

CUSTOMER POEM

Why do birds sing

by Regina D

Why do birds sing?
When the time is over
Youth is a tough shot
Weddings are unanimous
Why do birds sing?
The lady is in luck
How past the back shot
To do with the homes we live in.
Why do birds sing?
When we don't come out of our homes
Do they cling to the agony aunt
Until they are perfect
Why is the agony aunt faithful
When she is not reeling

Why do birds sing and the aura
they are publishing
The astral plane needs no gama
Still they are not foolish

Why do birds sing?
How do they test another metal
Can they go abroad
Sail the seven seas
When I have nothing on under



Look Ahead people: Meet Grace

Heads-up is created by and for Look Ahead customers, and every issue we use this section to get to know more about a staff member or customers. In this issue, we meet Grace, a customer at our Felstead Street service in Hackney.



Grace moved into Felstead Street in March 2017 and quickly settled in and began to take an active part in the service and how it is run. In August, her service was looking to hire a new Support Worker and Grace was asked by Aneta, the Contract Manager at Felstead Street to support the team with the interview process.

Although Grace was a little bit nervous to begin with, she told us

“I believe that the ability to hear what the customer has got to say is very important in a Support Worker”

“I enjoyed the process. Having worked with a number of Support Workers in the past, I believe that the ability to hear what the customer has got to say is very important in a Support Worker”.

Grace met all the candidates applying to join the team and had the chance to chat with them about their backgrounds and ask them some questions. She spoke to each candidate about their strengths and what they thought they would be able to contribute to their customer's journey to recovery.

Following the interview process, the successful candidates were offered a Support Worker role with the Felstead Street team and Grace is looking forwards to welcoming them to the service. As well as helping with the recruitment process, Grace has also been embracing her creative talents by getting involved with local art classes both in her service and in the community.

Volunteering opportunities

If you are interested in getting involved in your service, like Grace, then make sure you speak to your Support Worker to find out more about the different opportunities available.

As well as in your service, there are also lots of ways that you can volunteer your time with Look Ahead including:

- Using your experiences to support others as a Peer Support Volunteer
- Helping to check the quality of other services as a Quality Checker
- Using your experiences to train our staff as an Experts by Experience Trainer

Each of these opportunities includes a full programme of training and we are always looking for new people to get involved.

If you would like to find out more about any of our volunteering opportunities then please speak to your Support Worker or email us at volunteering@lookahead.org.uk.