

February - March 2017



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Heads-Up

Look Ahead's customer newsletter

Could you be one of our next apprentices?

Earlier this month, we took part in National Apprenticeship Week. This is a week all about promoting the benefits of apprenticeship schemes and celebrating the fantastic people that take part in them.

At Look Ahead we have had an apprenticeship scheme since 2008 and it is a great way for us to find and train new Support Workers. To celebrate the week we held a special workshop for current and former apprentices. The workshop was all about 'Making it happen' and focused on goal setting and motivation. The day also involved a talk from John Charles who suddenly went blind and who has overcome his disability to build a £1 million catering business.

During the week our Communications Team also spent time visiting some of our current apprentices in their services and sharing what they do on social

media. You can have a look at what they shared on our Twitter page @LookAheadtweets.

Our apprenticeship scheme is all about combining studying in college with practical experience to provide people with the skills, knowledge and experience to become a Support Worker. The scheme lasts 12 months and is open to anyone who is over 18 and has been a UK resident for over three years.

We welcome applications from people with a variety of backgrounds including people who have had experience of receiving support themselves. We know that the experience of receiving support can help Support Workers to understand what their customers are going through and we welcome applications from our former customers.

The next round of applications for our apprenticeship scheme will be opening later this year. If you are

motivated to make a difference to peoples' lives and are interested in learning new skills then why not apply?

You can find out more information about the scheme and the application process on our website by visiting www.lookahead.org.uk/apprenticeship-scheme





Are you a keen writer?

Would you like the chance to share your thoughts and experiences with other people?

As part of our new website, we are looking for customers who are interested in writing blogs for us. A blog is a short, informal piece of writing written by an individual that is then shared on websites.

You might be interested in writing about a topic that you have personal experience of. For instance, Alain, a customer we support with autism, is sharing his experiences to mark World Autism Awareness Week at the end of March.

If you are interested in getting involved let us know by emailing communications@lookahead.org.uk or calling us on 0207 368 6982.

We are your champions!



We are committed to delivering excellent services and our staff are key to this. Here Expert by Experience Co-ordinator and former customer, Alison Scott, talks about how her Support Worker helped her to achieve her goals and re-discover confidence in herself.

When I first came to Look Ahead, I had reached what was probably one of the lowest points in my life. Six months before I joined the service, I finally lost control over my alcohol dependency and I had ended up sleeping on the streets.

Before that point, if anyone had asked me I would have said I had my life under control. I had a good job and my own house; but I also had a drinking habit which was beginning to take over.

By the time I became a Look Ahead customer I was very isolated and in real need of support. I needed someone to guide and steer me through the chaotic life I was living. I had no structure or purpose and more importantly, no confidence that I could change the way I was living.

Over time, I got used to being in a service and built a relationship with the staff there. Through their support, my Support Worker became my champion helping to guide me through the maze of problems I had.

Throughout my time in the service my Support Worker was:

- Consistent
- Honest
- Accountable
- Motivational
- Proactive
- Inspirational
- On point
- No nonsense

At a time when I was vulnerable and in need of support, my Support Worker gave me encouragement, energy and most importantly, belief in myself. They were so sure of their belief in me, that I began to believe it too and change started to happen.

To really support someone and be a positive, consistent source of inspiration is hard work, but from a customer that experienced this kind of support, it can be and is life changing.

Get Involved

Look Ahead customer, Ron, has spent a lot of time volunteering for different organisations. Here he talks about the benefits of volunteering and how you could get involved.

Maybe you are looking for something to do to help other people and gain some skills, experience and confidence for yourself. Volunteering can also help to boost your job prospects as well as being a great way to get the most out of your time and try something new.

From the start, I should say that volunteering may not be for everyone. To get the most out of it, before you start, take some time to think about the things that you are interested in and try to find volunteering opportunities in that area. It is also important that you can commit to a certain amount of time each week. This could be just a morning or afternoon or a few days.

If you get job-related benefits make sure you speak to your Support Worker about the hours you are permitted to do. One of the rules of volunteering is that it's not paid, but make sure you aren't out of pocket — you should be repaid for any travel expenses and food.

When it comes to starting to look for opportunities, every local council has a volunteer centre where you can find adverts for volunteer vacancies and advice about how to get started.

If you have access to the internet you could also take a look at volunteering.london.gov.uk and do-it.org to find volunteer opportunities in your area.



There are lots of different ways that you can volunteer

No matter your age and level of activity, there is almost certainly something to suit everyone, ranging from peer support (see page 4) with Look Ahead to office work, shop work or the great outdoors such as city farm or conservation projects.

Personally, I have volunteered in three completely different organisations and I enjoyed each one of them for the new skills I learnt. I volunteered at:

- A local Mencap for people with learning difficulties. This was office based and included keeping membership records, helping edit and produce the quarterly newsletter and taking messages.
- At a nature reserve in Dorset where one of my jobs was to count and record sightings of rare birds.
- At homeless charity the Connection at St. Martin's where I was a step-up volunteer helping students in the IT group.

These three organisations are just a flavour of what is on offer and if you think it's something for you, why not give it a try?

Good Luck!

Congratulations Lizzie!

At the end of last year, Lizzie, who is a customer at Amy Garvey House in Kensington and Chelsea celebrated her wedding.

Lizzie married her husband Eddie who she met through friends. The happy couple said "I do" surrounded by friends and loved ones, including several staff and customers from Lizzie's service.

Congratulations Lizzie and Eddie, we wish you a very happy future together!



Look Ahead people: **Meet Liam**

Heads-up is created by and for Look Ahead customers, and every issue we use this section to get to know more about a particular customer. In this issue, we meet Liam, a customer at one of our services in Barking and Dagenham and find out more about how our support has helped him to discover new hobbies.



Liam has been living at his service in Barking and Dagenham for just over a year. In that time he has started attending college to study art and he has also taken up a very impressive hobby – computer building!

Instead of buying a laptop or computer to play games on, Liam decided to set himself the challenge of building his own computer.

Although he has always been interested in IT, Liam had never been taught how to do this so instead he taught himself using videos and tutorials online. Liam saved up to buy each part of the computer bit by bit, and then put them together to build his finished computer.

It was not an easy process and he had a few problems along the way, including issues with the motherboard (the part of the computer that sends power to all the other parts and allows them to work together). Even with these problems, Liam never gave up and earlier this year he managed to complete the computer. The computer is now fully working and he has lots of further plans to develop it in the future.

Congratulations Liam for such an impressive achievement!

Do you want to be the next person we talk to?

Have you done something amazing that you would like to share? Are you involved in your local service?

If you would like to be the person we introduce in the next issue of Heads-up, let us know.

You can either send us an email with your details to communications@lookahead.org.uk or call us on **0207 368 6972**.

JOIN US AS A PEER SUPPORTER

Are you:
Person-centred?
Enthusiastic?
Experienced?
Reliable?

If you answered yes to one or more of the above and would like to make a positive impact in someone's life than we have the perfect opportunity for you.

Look Ahead are recruiting for people to join our peer support programme. Through this programme, we train current and former customers to support others who may be struggling with similar issues. This might be around things like mental health, healthy living or looking after their home.

Peer support offers customers an extra level of support from someone with a real understanding of what they may be going through. As a Peer Supporter, you will gain new skills and confidence and also take part in accredited training which can help you towards future work opportunities.

If you are interested in becoming a Peer Supporter please speak to your Support Worker or email volunteering@lookahead.org.uk

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CARE, SUPPORT AND HOUSING

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Services we would be proud for our loved ones to receive

Welcome to 'Heads-up'. This customer newsletter is the place to go to find out what's going on in Look Ahead.