

1 March 2007

## **CHARITY LAUNCHES EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT VIA GP SURGERIES AND HEALTH CENTRES IN KNOWSLEY BOROUGH ON MERSEYSIDE**

GP practices and health centres in the borough of Knowsley on Merseyside, are participating in a new project enabling a specialist Employment Adviser to be placed within doctors' and health centre surgeries to help patients get back into work, education or training.

The service, run by employment charity Tomorrow's People, is part of the 'Knowsley Works' project led by Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council. This programme is financed through the 'Northern Way,' a unique collaboration between the three Northern Regional Development Agencies - One NorthEast, Yorkshire Forward and the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWRDA), designed to transform the economy of the North of England.

There are a number of surgeries and health centres located in all neighbourhoods of Knowsley which are currently getting involved in the Tomorrow's People GP Employment Adviser project. All medical practices under Aston Healthcare Limited, which are Camberley Medical Centre; Gresford Medical Centre; Knowsley Medical Centre; Leathers Lane Surgery; Manor Farm Medical Centre; Page Moss Surgery and Whiston Health Centre have agreed to be part of the project. Bluebell Lane Medical Practice and Dinas Lane Medical are also among the first to offer the service.

Under the project, patients who are out of work for health reasons and claiming Incapacity or Disability Benefits, and who would like independent, one-to-one confidential advice about finding and keeping a job, can now make an appointment with the Tomorrow's People Employment Adviser dedicated to that GP practice or health centre. Three Employment Advisers now operate from these Knowsley locations on a weekly rota basis. The service is provided at no cost to the GP surgery, health centre or to the patient.

Ongoing, one-to-one support provided includes confidence building, discussion of individual barriers to work, job interview techniques, CV writing advice, learning and vocational training opportunities, help with job application forms, work placements, paid and voluntary work options, as well as 12-month In-Work Aftercare Support following the clients' job start date.

Chris Jones, Local Operations Manager for Tomorrow's People Merseyside comments: "This is an innovative partnership between the public and voluntary sector, the former having recognised our unique set of skills and the strong track record of our GP based projects.

"Unemployment damages people's lives in many ways, including susceptibility to ill-health. We take our support directly out into the community and local neighbourhoods, through agreed outreach meeting venues including GPs' surgeries and health centres, to help those in need of advice on suitable work and learning options. Currently, we provide outreach support, in some form, to over 50% of the 39 GP practices and medical centres based in Knowsley, and remain in discussion with other surgeries to extend our employment support into neighbouring areas in Knowsley and we are hoping that more will come on board soon.



“Individual clients referred to our service by their GP or medical practitioner, register with their dedicated Tomorrow’s People Adviser on a voluntary basis. If patients feel they are being scrutinised or judged they will not seek help. Our independence from Government means that the Adviser devotes more time to the referred patient, which is vital in gaining the trust and confidence of the client in helping the individual to overcome their barriers to returning to work and/or learning.”

Although the service can be accessed by any person with health issues, it is hoped that Tomorrow’s People ongoing support will particularly help people in receipt of sickness, incapacity and disability related benefits, regain their confidence and achieve sustainable work.

Cllr Graham Morgan, Knowsley Council’s Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Neighbourhoods, said: “Knowsley Council has one of the best records for reducing unemployment, last year we were the best performing authority out of 408 across the country. We are continuously working to improve and reduce unemployment through creative and new initiatives including Fresh Start, Knowsley Works, and now this pioneering project working alongside colleagues in health.”

This initiative in Knowsley is based on Tomorrow’s People’s background of success running similar projects across 74 GPs’ surgeries, hospitals and health centres in various areas of the UK, including London, Devon, Bristol, Tyneside, and Glasgow. A similar pilot project is currently also running in the Kensington area of Liverpool through Kensington Neighbourhood Funding.

The first Tomorrow’s People GP Outreach Project began in a surgery in Kentish Town, North West London where for the last four years it has had a Tomorrow’s People adviser based on site at a busy GPs’ surgery. So far nearly 200 patients have seen the adviser in London, and of those who have completed the programme, 87% have returned to employment or are back in education or training. On average, 82% are still in work 12 months on. The project in London has saved the practice at least five GP consultations per patient, already saving the surgery thousands of pounds.

Margi Swift, is one of three Tomorrow’s People Employment Advisers in Knowsley and explains: “Helping people who have been on long-term sickness and into sustainable work is a long-term process. What is crucial is that we have the time to talk about the individuals’ barriers to work. We spend on average 45-60 minutes with a patient at each arranged meeting. In the last five months and with the support of the GPs and primary care teams locally, we have met one-to-one with 77 individuals, all of whom have a health related issue, to help them on their journey to work / training. To date, 1 in 3 people have been supported into a positive job or training outcome. Additionally, we stay in touch with the clients once supported into work or training, giving advice and liaising between the client and their employer, by agreement and where our support can help.”

The Tomorrow’s People Employment Advisers work as integrated members of the primary health care team. As a result, patients are referred by the GP, health visitor, nurse or counsellor, while others will self refer. All Merseyside-based Tomorrow’s People Employment Advisers are well qualified to give advice and guidance on employment and learning options. In addition, Tomorrow’s People on Merseyside has the Matrix Quality Standard awarded by EMQC, the national accountable body for the delivery of advice and guidance to adults.

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Tomorrow's People, which has a 22-year track record of helping people out of long term unemployment, provides a number of additional programmes across Merseyside including schemes for excluded young people and support for adult ex-offenders. In addition to GPs' surgeries and health centres, other outreach venues where Tomorrow's People provides one-to-one support locally includes a number of Probation offices and many community and neighbourhood learning centres.

Two Northern Way worklessness pilots have been launched in Knowsley, Barrow in Furness, Manchester, Liverpool and Easington. A further five pilot projects will be up and running by the Spring.

Any GPs, practice managers or health specialists who would like to get in touch and find out more about the project, or any person who would like to know more about this employment advice service, please contact Tomorrow's People by telephoning 0151 546 8037 (Knowsley office) or 0151 255 1400 (Liverpool office) or by writing to Tomorrow's People at 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Marybone Community Association, Addison Way, Liverpool L3 2EW or by emailing the Local Manager, Chris Jones, on [cjones@tomorrows-people.co.uk](mailto:cjones@tomorrows-people.co.uk)

There is also the option of visiting our national website at [www.tomorrows-people.co.uk](http://www.tomorrows-people.co.uk)

**-Ends-**

**Notes to Editors:**

- Tomorrow's People is a national charity that has helped change the lives of over 400,000 people across the UK who had been resigned to long-term unemployment and welfare dependency, since it was established in 1984. It engages with the people who are the hardest to reach by giving them one to one support in their own community, helping them find the right job and to keep it long term. On average, 76% of people helped by Tomorrow's People are still in employment 12 months on.
- The Northern Way is a unique collaboration led by the three Northern Regional Development Agencies (One NorthEast, Northwest Regional Development Agency and Yorkshire Forward) working with partners to close the £30 billion output gap between the North and the average for England over a 25 year period.

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