A glimpse into the future world of work

Layla Bell

Work Avenue, the employment and business hub for the Jewish community, is holding its annual student and graduate career networking event on 26th March. This unique information and networking opportunity gives young people soon to enter the world of work a glimpse into a future career that fulfils their employment aspirations and helps them gain a foothold on the employment ladder.

Organised by Work Avenue in partnership with global professional services firm BDO and the Union of Jewish Students, the client-led event invites experts from top companies chosen from sectors as diverse as accountancy, banking, marketing, law, property, politics, publishing and technology.

Statistics indicate that networking is a very powerful route into employment for students and recent graduates and this is reflected by the ongoing popularity of the career networking evening. In a series of scheduled appointments, undergraduates are provided with a unique opportunity through speed networking to speak to professionals, research the field and afterwards engage in open networking across the professional groups. Feedback from both sides from past events has proved wholly positive, with professionals supporting the development of students and students expressing their appreciation for this valuable opportunity.

Last year, over 35 professionals from a broad range of top companies and industries, each with a packed schedule, were welcomed to the event with a drinks reception and a buffet supper. Among the companies whose representatives are due to participate in the career networking evening this year are prestigious names such as the Bank of England, Deloitte, HSBC, Allsop and BDO.

Students or graduates who would like to attend should register as soon as possible. The

networking evening is a unique introduction to the world of work to a specific group of one people but it is not the only one supported by Work Avenue which is committed to helping people identify their first job or find their way back into employment. Two years ago, it launched the community's first employment and business hub with offices, meeting rooms, shared workspace, training rooms and a café. Whatever the age or stage of life at which Work Avenue's clients find themselves, a positive and practical approach to gaining or retraining for employment can represent a huge step forward in giving them the means to become financially self-sufficient.

Mental Health first for rebbetzins

Aryeh Friedman

A group of Federation rebbetzins has undergone a training course to qualify as Mental Health First Aiders. In a first for the *frum kehilla*, the group spent two full days on a rigorous programme, which was interactive, thought-provoking and highly practical.

Mental Health First Aid is a nationally recognised qualification which has been developed in response to growing awareness of mental health concerns in the workplace, in communities and within families. Current statistics show that one in four people will suffer from mental health challenges at one point in their life. Just as physical first aid includes the skills to recognise an illness or injury, provide immediate treatment and relief, and then refer on to an appropriate care-giver, Mental Health First Aid aims to accomplish the same for those suffering from mental illness.

The training was delivered by Restore, an Oxfordshire-based mental health charity that supports people in taking control of their recovery, developing skills and leading meaningful lives. They offer recovery groups, training and employment coaching to make this possible. This was the first interaction between Restore, which is one of the longest established and most highly regarded community rehabilitation services in the UK, and the London Jewish community. Instructor Julie Field was impressed by the calibre of participants, noting that it was a privilege to spend two days with such 'wonderful and inspiring women.' She was equally moved by hearing of the supportive framework in place at Federation communities and the quality of pastoral provision. She explained that having a caring social and communal environment is vital to aiding recovery from mental illness (alongside professional support, of course) and praised the 'truly amazing work' of the *rebbetzins*.

The course included information about key mental illnesses, such as depression, anxiety, eating disorders, personality disorders and drugs and alcohol use. It provided practical skills in dealing with symptoms such as psychosis, self-harm and side effects of severe depression, equipping the group with knowledge of what to do or say when faced with a crisis situation.

Most importantly, one of the aims of the programme is to reduce stigma and raise awareness of mental health. As Field pointed out, 'mental health' is a term associated with negativity, when actually it is an entirely neutral phrase referring to our state of health. Just as people are not shy to consider their physical health, everyone should be aware of their own mental health and understand what can be done to enhance their mental wellbeing.

Similarly, once equipped with correct information and tools, community workers need not be scared of helping individuals struggling with mental health issues. The instructor was extremely generous in sharing her own life experiences and talking about her recovery, breaking down misconceptions of how sufferers of mental illnesses are often viewed.

The *rebbetzins* were enthusiastic in their feedback about the course, unanimously rating it an outstanding success. They felt that the tools learnt were essential and will serve to augment their communal reach. Rebbetzin Shoshana Tugendhaft, of Beis Hamedrash Nishmas Yisroel, commented that the course was 'invaluable'. She said, 'It provided a huge insight into the spectrum of mental health illnesses faced by those in our communities. This course is something which I would highly recommend to others.'

This qualification is part of a package of events which has been designed to provide professional development and *chizuk* to Federation *rabbonim* and *rebbetzins*.

Last Friday, the boys of Years Five and Six of Noam Primary School went to Choice Care Home, previously Edinburgh House, in Wembley, where they entertained and then spent time talking to the residents. The boys are pictured here with Associate Head of Kodesh, Rabbi Zvi Cohen