

## **CASSUP visit to the Contact Centre 2016**

This report was written by CASSUP panel member, Yusuf Osman.

“The Croydon Adult Social Services’ User’s Panel (CASSUP) is primarily here to represent the views and concerns of social service users in Croydon. You told us that you were experiencing difficulties in contacting the Council. We’ve had a number of meetings with Jacquie Maclver-Dix who manages the centre and this culminated in four members of CASSUP being given a behind the scenes tour.

The Contact Centre can be divided into two parts. The first is the telephone centre where the people who speak to you when you call in work. We began our tour here. The room is divided in half, one part deals with calls related to social services, the other deals with everything else. There is a visual display which shows the various subject areas that the call centre deals with, how many people are waiting to be dealt with and how long they have been waiting. Each member of staff sits at a computer station fitted with a headset and microphone. Every call taken is logged which means that staff can easily see how a call has been previously dealt with. This is why when you call up you may be asked for your name, email address and other details.

We were able to listen in to some of the calls as they came in. What amazed me was the speed with which staff were able to locate information on a range of subjects. The calmness and politeness of the staff when dealing with sometimes difficult members of public was also notable. The atmosphere whilst busy also appeared to be friendly and supportive. Notable was the way in which Jacquie appeared to be known to all the staff suggesting that she is regularly there and accessible to her team.

We then proceeded to Access Croydon. This is the section of Bernard Weatherill House which if you visit the Council you are likely to go to. We were shown how members of the public were greeted by staff on their arrival and directed to self-service computers, free to use telephones, etc. We saw areas where meetings between residents and Council officers could take place. An effort has been made to make the area child friendly with a space with toys. Unfortunately due to theft there aren’t as many toys as there were and CASSUP may look at ways to help the Council get new toys. There are some private rooms where meetings can take place. This includes a specific room where vulnerable women can be settled while they receive help.

Electronic screens provide information which visitors might find useful as well as notifications of upcoming appointments. A part of the Access Croydon Centre is used to provide IT training for residents.

We all found the visit very useful and interesting. Everyone recognises however that things do not always work as they should and it is very important that if your experience of either the Call Centre, or the Walk in Centre is not satisfactory you must provide feedback at the time.”