I would like to nominate Stephen Lengden for an award

**WHAT**

Stephen is a parent to LGBT children who are also on the autistic spectrum. An opportunity arose for him to share his life experience and highlight his parenting challenges and how to build your own resilience when facing similar situations. It also explained how he supported his daughters through their mental health journey. This event was organised in the hopes it would resonate with other parents in a similar situation and highlight often unspoken subject matters.

It would also raise awareness of the hidden challenges effecting some of the team members, offering others the chance to share experiences, gain insight, and learn practical ways to support your team members, and your own child's journey towards resilience and healing.

It offered a unique experience of autism, LGBTQIA+ identity, Transgender transition, and impacts on mental health, offering strategies and resources that have proven effective in helping children thrive. The session celebrated the strength of our children and the power of family support in fostering hope and recovery through personal stories.

**WHEN** Initial session was held Nov 23rd 2023, but subsequently repeated.

**WHO** The session was initially presented via MS Teams to 400+ colleagues within UCT Directorate but due to it’s success was subsequently presented across the entire Service Planning and Delivery Directorate of over 9000 people. Later this was also presented on the DWP Wellbeing Community Network which has 13k+ Members.

**HOW** Stephen was asked to organise a presentation for a UCT Directorate all colleague call.

He drew upon his own experiences of parenting children in order to develop his presentation. He prefers to present from a less formal, unscripted standpoint so did not write chapter and verse, but simply bulleted essential topics that he wished to include and talked around them whilst presenting his slides.

The invitations were publicised via their Service Delivery Newsletter and to UCTD SharePoint and via email.

**OUTCOME**

Aside from raising awareness, which was Stephens sole original aim, the activity has led to the creation on a DWP LGBT Parents Family & Friends community chat of which he was granted the role of Chair with the aim of promoting a sense of belonging and a supportive network.

The Pride Network subsequently recommended Stephen become the Vice Chair of a soon to be formed Civil Service group focussing on the same issues.

Stephen has received many individual thanks and feedback from colleagues, plus recognition from Line Managers which has led to a conference being planned next year where Stephen will be a key speaker.

As a HASSRA Leeds Board Member and Chair of Single Activity Club, I wanted to nominate Stephen’s contribution as I recognised it mirrored HASSRA’s core values of equality, diversity and inclusion as well as its focus on family, lifestyle and good physical & mental health. I felt that his achievements directly contribute to supporting these aims.

As his presentation has been repeated in Health and Wellbeing Calls, which include a heavy focus on HASSRA, I believe that the synergies between Stephen’s activities and HASSRA’s aims will lead attendees to consider membership in the HASSRA portion of the calls.