

Carer's Workshop

We attended the Carer's Rights Day held at the Vassal Centre in Fishponds on the 30th November 2018 with over 80 carers from across Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire, to gain their perspective as carers about adult community health services. We talked through the background to the procurement and the model, followed by smaller workshops to discuss what carers considered important, what would help support them in their role and how adult community services could best take account of carers needs. The summary presented here reports themes in people's feedback. It does not necessarily represent the opinions of every person or group involved, or the CCG's views.

Access to services

Participants fed back that accessing services is particularly difficult, and carers struggle to find someone to take on a carer role in their absence. It requires a sitting service or the ability to take the person they care for along to their appointments and be looked after whilst they attend.

The majority of carers at the workshop felt that accessing a range of services in one place would be beneficial. This could be combined with support for the person they care for - including dementia support, mental health support and physical health support.

Transport was also a key issue for the carers who attended. Some wanted recognition of the difficulties within more rural areas of South Gloucestershire and North Somerset. The majority of carers felt under significant financial pressure and the costs of transport and accessibility often prevented them accessing the support they needed despite their knowledge of it.

Range of services

Carers highlighted key clinical conditions related to the person they cared for. They said they would benefit from accessing support services from within localities and within their registered practices. This included dementia, mental health, frailty and learning disabilities. Carers felt there was a need in more isolated areas to look at services being available across GP practices to ensure they could access services easily. Carers said they would like services to look at the local population need when deciding upon the location of services.

Many of the participants fed back that they would benefit from a range of services being accessible in one location covering a range of organisations, and most importantly health care, social care, mental health, alternative therapies and third sector services. It was also fed back that having a key person within the community service and General Practice who could signpost to these services would be important, to make sure it reaches as many carers as possible.

Carers said that in order to feel supported they need someone to listen to them at times of key stress e.g.: deterioration in the mental and/or physical health of the person they cared for. Many carers identified issues in contacting services, and subsequent delays, when what they needed was someone to understand their situation and provide some practical solutions and/or support.



Response time of services

Ensuring that response times are appropriate to the needs of the carer and patient were important to the carers that attended. They discussed the need to have one contact number and to talk to a familiar person that knew their situation, not to be kept waiting for support or a call back.

It was also important to participants that their requests for support were taken seriously and that timescales should be well communicated at every stage of care.

Participants also valued seeing a professional face-to-face, and were willing to wait to do this if it meant they could access a person who knew their situation well, and could provide them with advice and support.