

Carer Engagement 2015

Executive Summary

Introduction

Carers are paramount to our health & social care economy; they help to support our vulnerable groups & they know the person they support best. Croydon Council & NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) are dedicated to providing support to carers to enable them to continue caring. The Care Act 2014 places new requirements on local authorities to support & assess carers' needs. These requirements are mirrored in NHS England's Commitment to Carers 2014. This new legislation comes at a time of financial uncertainty. To help us understand the needs of carers in Croydon, this engagement exercise was conducted.

Objectives

- a) To understand the length of time it takes carers in Croydon to recognise their caring role, & the type of support first accessed
- b) To identify the needs of carers in Croydon
- c) To understand what we are doing well in Croydon for carers
- d) To identify areas for improvement to carer services in Croydon, & from this, what we should focus on over the next year



Carers
Support
Centre

Methods

To facilitate this engagement exercise, we employed two methods of data collection; an online survey & four focus groups. Both the online survey & focus groups were designed to get feedback on the whole model of support for carers in Croydon. The online survey was coproduced with the seven organisations providing carers' support in Croydon. The four focus groups were facilitated with four different groups of carers, these were; carers in the black & minority ethnic (BME) community, carers of people with learning disabilities, carers of people with mental illnesses, & a mixed group of carers. The focus group schedule was developed & facilitated with relevant carer organisation.

Results & conclusion

In total, 170 people participated in this engagement exercise. Of these, 127 people responded to our online survey, & 43 carers attended the four focus group sessions.

Results from the online survey indicated that 40% of carers in Croydon, were able to identify their caring role within six months, this was followed by 39% of carers who stated that it took between one & three years to identify themselves as a carer. Sixty three percent of carers stated that the first support service they accessed was information & advice.

Carers from this engagement recognised that there were a number of services in Croydon that were performing well, these were; the Carers' Support Centre on George Street, the peer support groups, activity groups, social services, short breaks & respite, online information, lunch clubs, befriending, day centres, the council's information & advice on direct payments & NHS information & courses.

It transpired from the focus groups that carers were unaware that the council funds the majority of services for carers in Croydon, & has chosen the independent sector to undertake this responsibility on the council's behalf. This resulted in a misconception that the council does not provide support.

When asked what Croydon could do better, eight themes transpired from the online survey, these were; better understanding of a carer's role (in health & social care), flexible opening times & borough wide access, increase respite / activity days, employment support, no need for improvement, promote current services, no support required, & increase contact with services.

Recommendations

1. For health and social care staff to have a better understanding carers

2. To provide services for carers in different areas of the borough

3. To look into more flexible opening times for the Carers Support Centre

4. To have more access to a break from caring

5. To provide carers with more support in employment

6. To promote current services provided by the council & by other organisations

7. To increase the amount of contact services have with carers where necessary

8. Follow ups from GPs for carers of people with mental illnesses

9. More training for healthcare professionals on mental health issues

10. More accessible low level mental health services

11. Being able to discuss the cared for person's information with carers

12. Not to reduce funding to carers support services

13. More translation of information materials into other languages

14. Better continuity of social services' staff

15. More direct payments for carers

16. More activities for carers & the people they support

17. Better council branding on commissioned services