

Review of commissioned services for carers in York 2013 'Feedback from the Review' July 2013

Background

Aim of the Review: to review provision of commissioned services for carers in York to ensure we provide the best support possible within available budgets.

The Review Process:

- Annual review meetings have been completed by Adults Commissioning and Contracts Team for the commissioned services for York Carers Centre; Crossroads; Age UK – In Safe Hands; York MIND Carers Counselling Service; and York Alzheimer's Society.
- A questionnaire was circulated through contacts and networks to carers and professionals; discussions held with key people including York Carers Forum; and a get together for carers 'Conversation and Cake' held on 21st June to discuss initial findings. A survey monkey questionnaire was circulated to GP practices. A total of 59 responses were received during this process.

What we found out

What works

There was overwhelmingly positive feedback about the value to carers of **all** the services above which are commissioned for carers in York. This quote gives a flavour of how much carers value the services that are in place:

"I have had much help....over the years, without this service I would not know how I would have coped".

York Carers Forum and CANDI (both carer led forums) were named as good sources of information, advice and support to local carers and positive comments were made about statutory support from health and social care services.

Young carers

There was positive feedback about the current services and sources of support for young carers in York.

What does not work and gaps in services

The following themes emerged about where there is a need for development, or where gaps exist:

- **Carer identification**

“Finding the right way into the system and services is the hardest thing”

There was particular concern about the need to be identified as a carer in hospital and health settings.

- **Information, advice and support**

Carers need information which is appropriate to their specific needs. Some feel bombarded by information and others feel they have none.

“The right information in the right place at the right time for the life stage of the carer”

- **Breaks for carers**

Opportunities for breaks of all sorts, including services and support to the cared for person including respite and day support, were very much valued. However, there was a general view that current provision does not meet the overall demand and that there are gaps. Carers can find it hard to take up the opportunity to attend support groups and events because they are unable to find alternative arrangements for the person they care for.

- **Carer assessments**

A Carer’s Assessment was viewed as a valuable source of support particularly for those people new to the caring role, or where the impact of the caring role increases.

“Carers need a timely Carers Assessment of Need”

There was significant concern expressed that there has been a long

waiting list for carer assessments in York for a number of years. City of York Council is currently investing resources in this area of work, on a short term basis to clear the waiting list. There were concerns expressed about the need to change how carer assessments are carried out to ensure, once cleared, the waiting list does not grow again.

- **Support for carers of people with mental ill-health**

When a person with mental ill-health is discharged from statutory services and goes on to receive support through primary care services, a carer can no longer access support from the Carer Support Workers in the Community Mental Health Teams.

“Carers still have to support someone with mental ill-health and do so without support themselves”

Carers also find difficulties in accessing support when a person with mental ill-health refuses to engage with mental health services.

- **Emotional support for carers**

There is a gap in provision of emotional support for carers, with some service providers looking creatively at how existing provision could be enhanced by use of telephone support and increased use of volunteers in this area.

- **Access to services and waiting lists**

Some feedback highlighted that statutory services could be difficult to access and that the existence across many services (e.g. benefits advice) of waiting lists or delays in support being available can cause difficulties for carers.

- **Joined up’ services**

Generally, carers would like better coordination across organisational boundaries, less demand in terms of assessments and paperwork and a more holistic approach.

“There should be better integrated working between adult, children’s social services and health”

A more specific point was that there could be an increase in coordination between organisations in York who provide direct support to carers so as to avoid duplication and improve collaborative working.

What next?

Services specifically commissioned to support carers

The aim was to review and assess if these services are providing the best possible support for carers within existing budgets. The conclusion is that these services are all well used and valued by those who benefit from them. There is pressure on many of these services and some hold a waiting list. During this time of financial restraint all providers have reviewed their services and implemented or plan to implement efficiencies to ensure as many carers as possible benefit from the resources that are invested.

Other support and services

The experience of carers is influenced by services and support which are far wider than the services which are specifically commissioned to support carers. Feedback received as part of the review highlighted a wide range of other sources of support that benefits carers. The three carer led forums in the City: Young Carers Revolution, York Carers Forum and CANDI are much valued and demonstrate the strengths and benefits of peer support. These organisations need to be supported to continue.

Issues raised by the review

A number of issues were raised by stakeholders with particular concern about the ongoing Carer Assessment of Need waiting list; the need to effectively identify carers in health settings; and concern that the demand for breaks for carers is in excess of what is currently available.

The issues raised in the review will be fed back to the appropriate organisation/forum. The Carers Strategy Group will be informed about the issues raised in order to monitor progress in addressing them.

Frances Perry, Carers and Strategic Policy Manager, City of York Council, July 2013