

TEIGNBRIDGE LOCALITY CARERS FORUM

Summary of meeting – 22 June 2006

RC (Vice-Chair) chaired the meeting in the absence of the Chair (AS) who was not well. 31 people attended.

NEWS UPDATE

- 1) County Carers Forum – The replies to the pre-submitted questions have been passed to Sonia Barton (Chair of County Carers Steering Group) for investigation. Carers were invited to the next County Carers Forum on 13 July. Pre-submitted questions were also being invited for the following County Carers Forum to be held at Buckfastleigh on 23 November (deadline in September).
- 2) Commission for Social Care Inspection – The issue of the lack of support given to carers being involved in the Commission's work was raised with David Johnstone (Director of Adult & Community Services) at a meeting on 15 May, and again with the Commission at the Mayoral Reception during Carers Week.
- 3) Rural Carers Project – Jo Pickering, based at Teignbridge Council for Voluntary Service, has just been employed to run a new project to research the needs of rural carers across Devon. This will help inform the planning of future services.
- 4) Drugs and Alcohol survey – Devon Drugs & Alcohol Action Team are currently researching the needs of carers involved with people who use drugs and alcohol. Forms are available from Jo Curtis, from the Teignbridge Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).
- 5) Primary Care Trust survey – Jo Curtis also handed out a short survey asking local carers about their services.
- 6) Mental Health Review Group – RC reported on the work of this group she has joined. It is looking at what is good and bad about the treatment of patients, and how inclusive the treatment plans are of carers.
- 7) Change of name for Social Services – Devon Social Services has changed its name to Adult & Community Services.(ACS)
- 8) Alternative Medicine warning – Clare Cotter (Carers Lead Officer for Teignbridge Primary Care Trust) issued a warning for carers to check with their Pharmacist that any alternative medicine they are taking will not react badly with the prescribed medicines they are taking.
- 9) Carers Link – Rosemary Whitehurst (Teignbridge Carers Link Worker) reminded all carers to join the Carers Link to receive a free Benefits Check and subscription to the Devon Link magazine.

10) Rowcroft Hospice – Sue White (Carers Services Development Officer) informed the Forum that Rowcroft Hospice is in the process of reviewing its services. This will mean the loss of some services relied on previously by carers and their cared-for. However they are in the process of piloting a new training programme for carers giving palliative care for someone.

11) Senior Matron for Teignmouth & Dawlish hospitals – Lyn Streep introduced herself as the Senior Matron for Teignmouth and Dawlish. She would welcome feedback from carers about the services provided by these hospitals.

DIRECT PAYMENTS

Derek Scarr, Projects Manager, Adult & Community Services

Lorraine Hale, Prevention Projects Officer, Adult and Community Services

Direct Payments is where anyone who has an assessed social care need can choose to receive money instead of services, and manage their own care. (This has nothing to do with the direct payments by which the Department for Work and Pensions pay benefits.) People can have Direct Payments for care at home, short breaks (respite), day care, equipment... anything except permanent residential care. The money can be spent on services provided by an agency, independent provider, or by people employing their own staff directly. Direct Payments arose out of the Government being lobbied by disabled people. It is meant to give more choice, autonomy, control and flexibility to people needing services.

The process starts of the same as for anyone needing services. Their needs are assessed, as well as their financial situation. The Local Authority then calculates the 'reasonable cost' of getting the services to meet those needs, and forms a contract with the service user. The service user then takes responsibility for controlling the payment and organising their own services. This is reviewed after 3 months (thereafter annually) to ensure it is working well.

Derek gave examples of different situations where Direct Payments could help people have their needs met more flexibly. However, they are not suitable for everybody, and so people should not feel pressurised into them.

The Local Authority employ Independent Living Advisors who offer advice and support to people, especially when it comes to employing care workers (eg payroll, book-keeping, tax returns, etc).

A new development linked to Direct Payments is called 'Self-Directed Support' (SDS). The current system of rationing financial support is thought to weaken involvement, choice and independence, while increasing the number of crises and high-cost care packages. It is hoped this new system will achieve more person-centred care, help control costs, and ration more fairly

Support will be offered for complex situations from an advocacy and support agency run within the independent sector.

Comments and responses to questions asked during the presentation

- Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks are not compulsory for adult care, but are recommended. The Local Authority will pay for these and help organise them.
- Shifting services into the independent sector is not necessarily the cheaper option, because the independent organisations also have management and overhead costs.
- There will be checks built into the system to guard against the small percentage of people who might try to abuse the new ways of doing things.
- Existing agencies who give information and advice to people not entitled to Local Authority financial support will continue to exist.
- In theory, this system will appear simpler to understand to people needing services.
- Carers and service users are involved in developing this new system by way of the Self-Directed Support Forum.
- Regarding the lack of local choice in services, this development should result in a wider choice of service providers springing up.
- Apparent pressure for people to move across to Direct Payments came from the service providers, rather than Local Authority staff.
- This needs good publicity material to help people understand the potential benefits.

FORUM CHAIRS MEETING WITH DAVID JOHNSTONE

Recently the Chairs of the Carers Forums across Devon met with David Johnstone (Director of Adult & Community Services) and Councillor Sally Morgan (the new Carers' Champion). They raised the following issues:

- 1) Transition between children and adults – a new protocol is being developed that will ease the move for children into adult services
- 2) Residential short-term breaks – there are a number of problems with this, eg no emergency cover in the South Hams, quality issues. The Director has asked for proposals from managers.
- 3) Spend on carers' services – there is no consistency of feedback from managers on how they are spending the Carers Grant. The Director has asked for sight of all such spend before passing it onto the Carers Forums.
- 4) Reorganisation of the NHS – from October this year, Teignbridge Primary Care Trust (PCT) will be swallowed up into one Primary Care Trust for the whole of Devon. A new Devon Adult Care Health and Social Care Board will ensure closer working between health and care services. Carers will be represented on the Board. Mike Eckersley (Operations Manager, Adult & Community Services) informed the Forum that Adult & Community Services were also re-structuring to fit in with the NHS new structure. Teignbridge will join South Hams & West Devon to work more closely together.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 5 October, 10.30-12.30, at The Dartmoor Lodge, Peartree Cross, Ashburton
Topic (provisional): Equality for Carers.