

NOTES FROM COUNTY CARERS FORUM – GROUP A

1. Local Groups Meetings

Key messages

It is better to go for a whole day rather than a morning or an afternoon
There needs to be a social element within the meeting
Providing lunch is a good idea
The formal bit should be kept short and snappy and well chaired
Topic driven
Use of a feedback sheet for topics for next forum
Need to look at the time and day (are some carers being missed)
Managers need to be committed to the management group
There needs to be regular feedback from managers to the carers forum
Networking with other groups (eg support groups, special interest groups) is important to ensure all carers have a voice
Carers need to see targets being met by managers
Need to see that a difference is being made by the forum

Where?

Complicated to change now
But difficult to cover all areas eg Okehampton

2. County Forum

Need tangible targets with timescales
Need a top down address to the forum on strategic issues - honestly
Not enough going up into the forum from grass roots
Should be more info from the top on targets achieved – positive approach
To engage carers need to be able to show what has been achieved
Carers need to be able to ask for a response
Strategic issues not individual locality issues which should be sorted in the locality
Managers need to buy into it – top down
If issues go to locality forums or specific forums and don't get an answer or don't feel heard then they should come to the generic County forum

How Often?

Six monthly
Dates need to go out well in advance
Feed back should go out to chairs by email before the forums
Could invite a GP representative and a practice manager rep.

FEED BACK FROM DISCUSSION GROUPS COUNTY CARERS FORUM 13 JULY

GROUP B

Question 1 - How can local groups/meetings work better? What area should local forums cover?

1. To attract and maintain the interest of local people the meetings need to take place in the community where the carer lives and should not be too often and should also take account of working carers, and may be teenage carers approaching 18, who may not be able to attend day time meetings.
2. Should consider a more robust link with local condition specific groups who may also be in touch with carers and who might benefit from links to Carers Link.
3. Frequency of meetings also requires more resources in terms of admin, publicity etc and there would be a cost associated with this.
4. Transport costs and lack of rural transport will mean carers can not always travel outside of their own town.
5. Meetings that seem most successful include a mix of business and a social element plus a good lunch.
6. Availability of substitute care very variable across the Carers Links and also on offer to Young Carers, this needs to be raised at County Carers Steering Group.
7. Manager representation at management group still not consistent across all client groups in all localities. Concern that the pending loss of the NHS non Exec chairs could destabilise the groups at a vulnerable stage in their evolution pending PCT reorganisation.

Question 2

How can County Forum/meetings work better? How frequent should County Forums be?

1. Re County Carers Steering Group – need to clarify the autonomy of this group, is it mandated to take decisions? Power should be with the locality forums, Steering Groups is not called a management group but appears to act unilaterally.
2. Not confident that County Carers Steering Group are proactive in monitoring outcomes. This group do not have a strategy for service review .

3. Communication between locality forums and Steering Group improving , there is general recognition that there is limited money with the LA but carers still voice frustrations at service development.
4. Role of County Forum unclear, carers in localities should have a strong voice but carers question whether today, the County Carers Framework provides a greater opportunity to influence and bring about change, than before.
5. For localities to be active campaigners there needs to be additional investment in resources. Currently some Carers Links do not have a development worker or adequate time to be as proactive as they would wish.

WORKSHOP C – PHIL DYSON

Need to make sure at local forum that people know the roles staff have.

Frequency and timing of meetings between localities has to vary regarding geographical settings i.e. distance/travel times. Flexibility is better. It was queried whether formal settings for meetings such as hospitals may be off putting to carers.

To recognise that some carers do not want to be involved in forums etc. and so do not become obsessed with numbers

Whilst ex carers need to be engaged there needs to be a 'time limit' for them to attend as their experiences become outdated.

FORUMS – feedback

No instant implementation – takes time

Contacting other support groups for input by letter/visits.

Informal meeting places/groups i.e. dementia care is good way of making contact/ feedback.

Managers need to come to forums to add 'feel good' factor to carers.

Lunch etc helps, also speakers and contact details.

Reports back by managers can be officious.

PART B

28 Market/coastal towns?

Not only formal forums but implement with links to local/informal meetings.

Use informal meeting places – web cams/recording to put on internet later?

Management groups restructuring into larger ones?

Need to develop robust enough and flexible structure to survive PCT/SS/Government restructuring.

COUNTY FORUMS

Q1) How can it work better?

Pre submitted generic questions and answers back more quickly than next forum agenda.

(Quality standards time for written replies in industry).

Questions that are specific should be re-routed onto appropriate forum.

Record should be kept of issues raised at county forum and result monitored and fed back.

Informal networking over breaks/lunch important.

Two/three meetings annually about right (every other one contact with senior management)