

Carers Support Centre Forum July Meeting

Date

30/07/2019

Time

1.30pm-3pm

Attendance

7 members of Carers Support Centre Forum:

Amy Deakin.

Gwen Richards (Localities - New Addington).

Emer O'Hanlon (Localities - Croydon South).

Apologies for absence

Ann, Maurice, Freda, Angela.

Introduction & housekeeping

Updates

Feedback forms

Amy informed members that the last Forum meeting scheduled will be 24 September. Encouraged members to fill in feedback forms, as this will help Forum continue and also help with planning/ways of improving the Forum in future.

Guy Van Dichele meeting

Amy updated the Forum on the meeting with Guy Van Dichele on 23 July. Jeff, Debra and Yvonne had also attended. There were 20 attendees at that meeting including Croydon Council professionals and 15 carers. Actions agreed at that meeting were:

- Hold follow up meetings - next to be scheduled in two months' time.
- Carers Support Centre and Croydon Council staff to liaise to arrange a housing advice surgery for carers at the Carers Support Centre.
- Amy and Stephen Bahooshy (Croydon Council commissioner) to work together to re-publicise Carers Strategy in November 2019.

Members commented that Guy was very personable and seemed to want to do something for carers.

Localities

Speakers - Gwen Richards (New Addington) & Emer O'Hanlon (Croydon South).

Gwen Richards told the Forum about the experience of her mother caring for her husband, and her own experience caring for her mother. She told this story to illustrate how carers may not call themselves carers and that they may not be getting information/support they need, when they need it. She and her colleague then opened the floor to a wider discussion about localities and how they will work.

Discussion

- Localities aim to provide residents with access to information where and when they need it.
- Acknowledged needs of residents who aren't online.
- Localities aim to understand gaps in service provision - allow people more choice and control over support, avoid reaching a crisis.
- Example - New Addington Library community hub in New Addington. When people talk to staff, often about issues not to do with books - housing issues, etc. Need to make the most of opportunities when someone contacts a council service, direct them to other sources of help locally.
- Localities is in early development - three pilot areas are Thornton Heath, New Addington and Croydon South. E.g. in New Addington, key areas they're looking at are employment, health & wellbeing, early years/children and housing.
- South is one in earliest development - data suggests current issues include social isolation/exclusion and carer issues.
- Trying to make joined-up services - CV/job clubs, talking points (drop-ins), reading groups, etc.
- Important part of work is sharing information on what's already going on and supporting smaller community groups.
- Carer asked where they are based - Bernard Weatherill House, but also out in localities.
- Carer asked if staff receive carer awareness training - not currently.
- Carer asked about their professional backgrounds - Gwen has worked with single homelessness service/housing services, Emer has worked in prison service commissioning and then worked with independent foster agencies at Croydon Council.
- Carer expressed concern that they are spreading themselves too thin, won't success trying to do it all.
- Amy suggested it was more about signposting/connecting dots - gave analogy of Carers Support Centre not providing all services carers might need, but signposting/referring/liaising with other services.
- Carer asked how Forum fits into localities - personal experience is important, recognise that currently council services can be fragmented and that Bernard Weatherill House can be hard to access, want to listen to carers and learn from them, will use feedback from Forum to inform service.

Agreed actions:

- Gwen will send Amy a one page summary of the service to circulate with the Forum.

Engaging with your councillor

CLlr Jane Avis did not attend, so this section was skipped.

Engaging with your MP

Amy provided general information on MPs and how to engage with them, discussed inviting Sarah Jones MP to future forum and asked for members' ideas on what to ask from Sarah Jones MP at that meeting.

Discussion

- Amy asked members who had written to their MP - all members present had.
- Amy suggested MPs don't do planning - Jeff said they can, Chris Philp MP supported Purley residents with influencing planning decisions. (Note - Parliament website previously stated that MPs can't influence council staff on planning but this has since been removed.)
- Peter made point that some MPs ask for your postcode/phone number when you email them - MPs will only respond to their constituents.
- Amy asked how many people had attended an MP surgery to meet them in person - around half of members had. Those who hadn't said they didn't know they could.
- Lydia made point that suggesting you should dress smartly to meet your MP may be a barrier - some people can't afford it/not authentic. Amy acknowledged this point. Stressed it is more important to be prepared before meeting your MP.
- Discussed that while members knew how to engage, many other carers don't know and need this basic information.

Meeting Sarah Jones MP

Discussion

- Members agreed that it would be good to invite Sarah Jones MP to the next meeting.
- Debra and Patrick shared past positive experiences engaging with Sarah Jones MP.
- Amy showed members previously discussed priorities and asked which areas the MP could possibly help with.
- Lydia suggested push for infrastructure for carer education and training. Asked are carers in Health & Wellbeing Strategy in Croydon, and why are many carers not even aware of the strategy?
- Yvonne made point that money is vital - referenced lack of equity between mental and physical health.
- Could MP influence the health board?
- Focus on health and wellbeing suggested.

- Yvonne - suggested instead that we present priorities as a whole and work we've done as a Forum to get there.
- Amy put this to the group. Members agreed to do this.
- Lydia mentioned that working carers should also be included.
- Matty made point that in her view education and training was about identifying new carers and helping them navigate the system, whereas health & wellbeing support helped current carers cope.
- Need for a framework for education & training.
- Debra raised importance of Carer's Assessment - under health and wellbeing.
- Yvonne asked would these be submitted to Sarah beforehand? Amy said they would.

Actions

- Amy will contact Sarah Jones MP's office, asking for Sarah to attend the next scheduled meeting or on an alternative date in September if she is unavailable.
- Amy will write up priorities/actions discussed at previous Forums and send to Sarah Jones MP once a date is in the diary.

Next meeting date

Date of next meeting given as **24 September 2019 at 1.30pm** at the Carers Support Centre. Please note that this may be subject to change depending on Sarah Jones MP's availability.

AOB

- **Direct Payments Consultation** - meeting on 8 August 1pm - 4pm at Braithwaite Hall, Croydon Town Hall, Katherine Street. To book, text or call Stephen Bahooshy, 07540139692. You can also respond online <https://getinvolved.croydon.gov.uk/KMS/dmart.aspx?noip=1&strTab=ConsultationTimeline&PageType=item&DMartId=573>
- **Bereavement Support Group** for carers/former carers leaflets available from Amy.
- **Training Survey** - 70 responses in total. Major theme was that carers want a mixture of training themes, but overall prefer health & wellbeing topics. If anyone is interested, Amy can provide further details on the findings.