

CARERS' VOICE

Annual Report 2006/07



Members of Carers Voice Group pictured above.

Introduction

Carers' Voice, with the support of Carers of West Lothian, was formed in January 2006 and drew together individual carers and representatives from carers' groups who were keen to influence the way that local services were delivered.

The aims of the group include:

- Discussing issues that are of importance to carers
- Interacting with other bodies such as the Community Health and Care Partnership (CHCP), the Public Partnership Forum (PPF), NHS Lothian and West Lothian Council to ensure that carers' issues are taken into consideration when formulating policy and providing services.
- Forging links with organisations involved in national carer agendas and disseminating information locally about national initiatives.

The group meets on a 6-weekly cycle timed to fit in with the meetings of the CHCP Sub-committee and PPF, both of which are attended by representatives from Carers' Voice, and this promotes more efficient two-way communication.

Activities in year one

Local Issues

The group has discussed local carer issues in order to ensure that these are brought to the attention of the NHS or other local service areas and to ensure that carers know how to take their concerns further. These include:

The new patient focussed podiatry and chiropody appointment system - In response to the volume of complaints about the new system, including those from Carers' Voice, the podiatry service surveyed patients about their experience of the service. As a result the system has been adapted in each area to meet those needs.

GP appointments systems - Carers raised the subject that across West Lothian there seems to be no regulation regarding GP Appointment Systems. This has been a long-standing problem with many GPs operating different systems, some are operating on same day appointments or pre-bookable appointments while others are offering a mix. The Patient & Public Involvement Officer was able to incorporate these concerns into a report collating feedback from patients given through the General Practice Assessment Questionnaire (GPAQ) survey. Most GPs now offer a range of appointments to ensure their patients are seen in a timely fashion. This has been achieved by same day appointments, pre-bookable appointments, telephone consultations or simply being offered an appointment with another health professional i.e. the practice nurse, if appropriate. However at this point in time it is entirely up to the partners at the various GP surgeries as to how they manage their appointment systems.

Experimental treatment for stroke patients – this issue was raised on behalf of a carer whose husband had been involved in the experimental treatment. The treatment had been very successful but the funding had come to an end. The carer wanted to know how pressure could be put on NHS Lothian to provide further funding. It was suggested that the query be taken forward to the next Patient Forum meeting for advice. As a result the carer was given the contact details of the most appropriate person to write to.

Availability of beds for mental health sufferers - A carer from the group raised a concern regarding the lack of beds available locally for emergencies. As with the example above, the query was taken to the next Patient Forum meeting and the carer was given the contact details of the most appropriate person to take their concern to.

Presentations

Guest speakers have been invited to make presentations on local issues of importance to carers. Topics have included:

- The West Lothian Public Partnership Forum
- The Coalition of Carers in Scotland (COCIS) and an up- date on the Care 21 Project - 'The Future of Unpaid Care in Scotland'
- The new GP contract
- The Independent Living Fund.
- The Ace Project (Action for Carers in Employment)
- The NHS Lothian Draft Primary Care Modernisation Strategy
- Carers Assessments



Carers Comments

"I considered it may turn out to be a 'Talking Shop'One year on, I am delighted to report that my views and those of friends and family I have represented, have not only been listened to, but acted upon"

"I have learned so much being part of this group"

"It's true to say that here in West Lothian we really do have a 'Carers Voice' "

"As a fairly new member of Carers Voice, I am still awe-struck. I am now aware of lots of carers' information I never knew existed."

"Carers Voice is the best place to air your concerns and to learn about new developments"

Activities in year one

Strategic Policy Input

The group has also been involved in a number of policy consultations and has given detailed responses offering the carers' perspective. These include:

The Lothian Carers Information Strategy

NHS Lothian's Draft Primary Care Modernisation Strategy 2007-2012 - The group suggested additions including the principles of the Carers Information Strategy and more support for carers and made reference to GP appointment systems and the pressures on the ambulance service. A response was also submitted on behalf of Signpost Parent Carers.

Carers Question Time – group members attended to question a Panel of local Scottish Parliamentary candidates on what their commitment to carers would be if they were elected.

Day Care provision for Older People - Group members attended to give the carers' perspective at an event to discuss the interim review of day care provision and to look at the future of Day Care.

Lothian Physical and Complex Disability Strategy – Carer Scrutiny Panel - A group of experienced carers has been brought together to assist with the development of this strategy, including a representative from Carers Voice.

Social Work Service User & Carer Involvement – training & assessment of student social workers - the Learning and Development Advisor for West Lothian Council is looking to involve carers in the selection and training process of social work students. Three group members are taking this forward and examining options.

Health and Healthcare of Children and Young People in Lothian - a carer member of the group had input into this policy.

Carers Assessments – The group made the following suggestions to develop the process and monitoring forms:

- Option for carers to put their name on the form - only if they want to. This would aid the evaluation of both staff and carer monitoring forms.
- Date of birth could be requested in order to improve monitoring and to help identify young carers
- Develop the adults and older peoples service monitoring methods/tools for use with young carers
- Clarify the definition of 'respite'

The relevant responses and minutes for these are available on request.

Activities in year one

Information Sharing

Group members also distributed information and feedback on the topics raised at Carers' Voice through their own information networks (to ensure that issues were brought to the attention of the widest possible range of carers and that feedback could be passed on where appropriate). Examples include:

The Future of Unpaid Care

The Care 21 Project 'The Future of Unpaid Care in Scotland' was set up to explore the likely needs of unpaid carers in Scotland over the next 10 years. 22 recommendations were made in the report which, if implemented, would improve the lives of Scotland's 600,000 carers. Carers Voice group members submitted a petition, as part of a national carer organisation initiative, to the Scottish Executive supporting the implementation of all the recommendations.

The Executive's response to the Care 21 Report was to set out a 10-year vision with four immediate priority areas for action: support for young carers, respite breaks for carers, carers' health, and training for carers.

Carers Manifesto

The Carers Manifesto has been put together by the National Carer Organisations and calls for real investment in carers' services, including more money for respite, local carer organisations, training for carers and more financial support for carers.

Members of Carers' Voice 2006/07

Carers' Voice comprises representatives drawn from a number of special interest groups, as well as individual carers:

Lyn Aitken	Learning Disability Forum
Derek Burns	Dementia Support Group
Julie Cassidy	Patient & Public Involvement Officer
Jill Derby	Service Development Officer WL Council
Margaret Dickinson	Carer
Tricia Fraser	Patient Involvement Worker
Pauline Hunter	Parent carer
Annmarie Keast	Carers of West Lothian
Hugh Macrae (Chair)	Dementia Support Group
Dave MacGillivray	Arthritis Support Group
Alex McGill	NSF Support Group/Mental Health Forum
Anna McGill	NSF Support Group/Mental Health Forum
Mary-Denise McKernan	Carers of West Lothian
Lesley Mount	Signpost
Ian Pitcairn	NSF Support Group/Mental Health Forum
Wilma Philpot	Young Carers Development Worker
Michael Price	Carer
Paul Weddell	Learning Disability Forum

Care to join?

If you would like more information on Carers' Voice or are interested in joining, please call **Carers of West Lothian on 01506 771750 and ask to speak to Mary-Denise McKernan or Annmarie Keast**. We always welcome new members

..... and remember, you don't need to come along to every meeting - you can 'dip in and out' depending on your specific interest.