

Medway Council
MEETING OF HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 23 March 2010

5.00pm to 7.30pm

RECORD OF THE MEETING

PRESENT: Councillors: Avey (Vice-Chairman), Bhutia, Gilry, Griffin, Hewett, Sheila Kearney, Kemp, Maisey, Murray, O'Brien (Chairman) and Shaw

LINK representative without voting rights:

Shirley Griffiths

Substitutes:

In Attendance:	Rose Collinson	Director of Children and Adult Services
	Angela Drum	Head of Legal
	Genette Laws	Social Care Commissioning and Voluntary Sector Manager
	Jane Love	Voluntary Sector Grants and Contracts Manager
	David Quirke-Thornton	Assistant Director, Adult Social Care
	Wendy Alleway	Head of Commissioning for Older People, NHS Medway
	Suzanne Brooker	Patient Experience Manager - Medway NHS Foundation Trust
	Fay Brown	Interim Director of Integrated Commissioning, NHS Medway
	Helen Buckingham	Director of Commissioning and Performance, NHS Medway
	Marion Dinwoodie	Chief Executive, NHS Medway
	Councillor Jane Etheridge	
	Rosie Gunstone	Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator
	Julie Keith	Head of Democratic Services
	Barry Saunders	Carer
	Jacqui Wharrad	Representing Admiral Nurses

687 RECORD OF THE MEETING

The record of the meeting held on 18 February 2010 was agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

688 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Val Goulden and Gulvin.

689 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman, Councillor O'Brien, declared a personal interest in any reference to the NHS by virtue of the fact that members of his family work within the NHS.

Councillor Gilry declared a personal interest in any reference to Medway Maritime Hospital by virtue of the fact that she occasionally works there.

Councillor Sheila Kearney declared a personal interest by virtue of being a member of Medway NHS Foundation Trust and South East Coast Ambulance Trust.

Shirley Griffiths, LINK Co-ordinator, declared a personal interest by virtue of being a member of Medway NHS Foundation Trust, a member of South East Coast Ambulance Trust, Medway Older People's Board and a GP Patient Forum Member.

690 SUPPORTING CARERS

Discussion:

The Chairman, Councillor O'Brien, welcomed all present to the meeting and explained that the purpose of the meeting was to forward key points to the Carers' Partnership Board on support for carers.

The Director of Children and Adults gave a brief introduction to the Medway Carers' Strategy and said she welcomed the scrutiny on what was being done for carers and what more needed to be achieved. She commended carers on their commitment and dedication and stated that for many people the future they planned was often changed permanently and their economic and personal wellbeing deeply affected. She emphasised the importance of all agencies involved providing a seamless service to both carers and the cared for.

The Chairman then invited Barry Saunders, a Medway carer who had recently been involved in a television documentary regarding dementia, to speak to the Committee.

Barry explained the history of his caring for his wife Yvonne and the lengthy time involved in obtaining an official diagnosis for her. He stated that she had eventually been offered a drug given in an attempt to curb the progress of Alzheimer's disease but that this had no effect as the disease had already progressed too far. He felt strongly that if she had been diagnosed at a much earlier stage the drug might have been effective. He informed the Committee of the struggles he had faced, as a working carer, to keep financially stable

while also taking care of his wife. Members were also told of the emotional toll and feeling of loss that he had felt in not being able to continue with a normal happy relationship as the disease progressed and his wife's condition deteriorated.

There were a number of points he wished to make:

- The Dementia Strategy did not refer specifically to the needs of a working carer or those with early onset dementia this was a significant omission
- Earlier diagnosis of Alzheimer's/dementia was vital to ensure that any treatment was effective
- Direct payments had been very helpful in enabling him to continue in employment
- He was disappointed there was currently no monitoring of dementia
- On the occasions when respite had been used his wife had walked into the respite home but when she came out she was in a wheelchair. He felt this could be due to the fact that the ratio of carers to cared for was 2:10 and this meant that time could not be taken to ensure that his wife exercised regularly and kept to her usual routines

The Assistant Director, Adult Social Care, thanked Barry for his powerful story and accepted that it included some difficult messages around lack of support around a number of areas.

With regard to the comments about respite care he felt this was an issue, which the Council as commissioners of respite services needed to investigate to ensure that the condition of those being cared for was sustained and did not deteriorate. The importance of a seamless service was emphasised.

He then referred to the very successful benefits take up campaign which had been undertaken across Medway which had resulted in excess of £250,000 of additional benefits being paid to carers. He said it was very important that all partners listened to what carers were saying and continued to improve services to minimise any distress caused.

The Chief Executive of NHS Medway added her thanks to Barry and stated that all partners needed to understand the role they should play in supporting carers and the cared for.

The Director of Commissioning and Performance, NHS Medway also expressed the view that health and social care should work together to join up services with regards to supporting carers.

The Head of Commissioning for Older People, NHS Medway explained that the Dementia Advisors service was now being introduced in Medway and a dementia web would be set up for carers of people with dementia. She also stated that although working carers or people with young onset dementia were not specifically referenced in the National Dementia Strategy, or the local Dementia Strategy, that their needs would be fully considered across health and social care.

The meeting was then opened up to other carers to put forward their issues. The Chairman requested throughout the meeting that where carers had an outstanding issue which needed to be dealt with that they should complete a feedback form with the details of their case in order that it could be followed up.

A number of Medway carers then participated in the meeting by sharing their personal experiences of care. The following main issues were shared are categorised below into social care, health issues and general matters, and include the issues raised by Barry Saunders earlier in the meeting:

Social care issues

- There was a general lack of awareness by carers about where to obtain support and assistance for the carer or cared for, in particular during evenings and over the weekend. There were some misunderstandings about eligibility for help some emanating from care workers themselves
- The view was expressed that direct payments had been very helpful
- The quality and outcomes from respite care need to be carefully monitored. A number of comments were made about the condition of the cared for person deteriorating following a period of respite care possibly due to a low staff to patient ratio and there was mention of a patient going missing while in respite care
- Consideration needs to be given to ways of increasing social interaction for young people who are autistic and have learning difficulties
- Concern was expressed that there were many respite places for adults with a learning disability but only one for adults with a physical disability

Health issues

- Concern was expressed that young people with Downs syndrome have a greater likelihood of developing early onset dementia and this may not be picked up early enough
- The Dementia Strategy did not refer specifically to the needs of a working carer or those with early onset dementia and this was a significant omission
- Earlier diagnosis of Alzheimer's/dementia was vital to ensure that any treatment was effective
- There was currently no monitoring of dementia
- Unacceptable delays in Accident and Emergency at Medway Maritime Hospital were referred to when the patient was being aggressive due to dementia causing anxiety and indignity to the carer
- The emergency pharmacy did not appear to be able to dispense drugs to treat Parkinson's disease leaving the cared for person without medication for 24 hours

General issues

- The comment was made that the timing and venue of the meeting made it difficult for some carers to attend and that carers need adequate notice of a meeting
- The use of Crossroads services (respite care) and St Leonard's place, Maidstone Road (an independent living centre) were highlighted as being of great benefit
- Reference was made to a feeling of isolation which carers often feel and the lack of support offered towards an adult with physical disabilities
- The suggestion was made that the Carer's Strategy aim that carers should have a life of their own was unrealistic
- There was evidence of a breakdown in communication between agencies and a lack of joining up of information between services which lead to cared for people not receiving adequate or appropriate care and attention both in hospital and across social care
- More emphasis needed to be placed on supporting working carers to ensure that they can maintain employment and not end up in a situation where their home and employment are at risk because of their caring duties

The following initial responses were given:

The Director of Commissioning and Performance, NHS Medway, explained that anyone with a learning disability was entitled to an annual health check and offered to look into how to promote this further with GPs.

The Head of Commissioning for Older People also stated that the point put forward about young people with Downs syndrome being more susceptible to early onset dementia would be addressed by NHS Medway.

The Director of Commissioning and Performance apologised on behalf of the health service for the shortfalls around the service provided at Medway Maritime Hospital referred to during the meeting and stated that there was a representative from Medway Maritime Hospital present who would take notes of the issues concerning the hospital and relay them to a meeting of the Patient Experience Group which would meet next week.

Members then thanked carers for sharing their very moving experiences and paid their own personal tribute to the work they are doing as Medway carers.

The following suggestions/comments were then put forward by Members:

- The Carers Strategy was short on information on the needs of working carers particularly those who had a disabled child and were coping with a lifelong situation of caring
- It would be helpful if concessionary rates at local leisure and sports facilities could still apply for carers outside of the normal limits to enable carers to take advantage of them

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- The production of an information pack for cared for people giving details of their condition, medication and routines would be helpful in ensuring continuity when they are in respite or hospital care as the document can travel with the cared for person
- It would be helpful if the Carers' Strategy action plan could be more specific about the way that gaps are to be plugged
- Attention needs to be paid to care received during the transition period from child to adult as this period often brought about changes for the service to the carer and cared for which needed to be managed more effectively
- It was important that the comments made by carers were now followed up and acted on to make the process meaningful for all concerned
- Carers need access to comprehensive information and support and it was clear from evidence gathered that many carers were unaware of who to speak to and how to access help. It was important to remember that not all carers had access to computers or mobile telephones

The Assistant Director, Adult Social Care, explained that Carers UK were running pilots involving working carers and it was important to learn more about ways of supporting them.

The Director of Commissioning and Performance, NHS Medway, gave an undertaking to take forward the suggestion of an information pack about a cared for person to see how this could be developed.

The Chairman referred to an email received from a carer unable to attend the meeting and stated that the carer recommended a book called The Selfish Pigs Guide to Carers by Hugh Marriott published by Sphere 2003 and reprinted in 2008, ISBN 978-0-7515-3709-3 which had been very helpful to her.

He then thanked all present for their attendance and as the meeting was the last in the municipal year thanked the committee for their co-operation over the past year.

Decision:

- (a) The Committee requested the Carer's Partnership Board to
- (i) consider and respond to the key issues and recommendations set out in paragraphs 3.3 and 3.4 of the report together with the points raised during the meeting;
 - (ii) actively examine best practice in local authority areas judged to be high performing and improving, and, if appropriate, undertake visits involving interested members of this Committee;
 - (iii) review and set achievable target timescales for implementation of the action plan underpinning the Carers' Strategy and to provide this revised timetable and its responses to the points referred to in

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(a) above to all members of the committee by briefing note by the end of May 2010;

- (b) The Director of Children and Adults is requested to report back to the Committee in October 2010 with progress on implementation of the Carers' Strategy Action Plan.

Chairman

Date:

Rosie Gunstone, Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator

Telephone: 01634 332715

Email: democratic.services@medway.gov.uk

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