

Notes from care home online forum – 20 February 2024

Hosted by Derry Nugent (DN)

DN opened the forum and all participants introduced themselves.

Current issues

The following issues came up in the group discussion.

Respite care

- Lack of respite care and not being able to book far enough ahead to book a holiday or planned hospital care. Some carers are delaying major operations as there are no respite beds available for their loved ones while they are in hospital and recovering.
- DN provided an update on this – Adult Social Care is now in a position to commission bookable respite bed as previously discussed. Discussions will continue on the need for further provision.
- DN asked if availability of respite beds is the problem or the booking process, or both. The group agreed that it is both of these issues. Sometimes the appropriate level of care is not available e.g. a residential bed rather than a nursing bed, or a patient requires dementia-specific care. The location is also an issue – a place may come up but it could be miles away from home. The booking system is an issue as it only allows beds to be booked three weeks prior which can be stressful for the carer planning a break.
- Also important to consider continuity of care of the 'cared for' person as well as the carer.
- Mixed feedback about the booking process – some carers have been told if they are paying for the care themselves, to go and sort it out themselves and they don't know where to start.
- We heard about one case where a carer booked respite care while she was in hospital for planned care. The person she cared for experienced issues while she was away and the care home rang her while she was in hospital to ask when she was coming back. This caused a great deal of stress. Although a care package was in place when she returned home, she rang in crisis as she struggled to look after her loved one when just out of hospital herself.
- There had been no feedback received from carers caring for an adult with a learning disability, but it was agreed it would be interesting to ask the

Learning Disability Network if they had heard similar feedback about respite care.

Discharge from hospital

- One attendee suggested the Safe Discharge from Hospital programme could help ensure everything is in place before a patient leaves hospital. This could be useful for carers leaving hospital and struggling to care for a loved one when they get home.
- Not all GPs have Care Coordinators but patients could be referred through OneCall and/or the consultant's secretary.
- There are difficulties arranging care if the patient is receiving care across different geographical areas e.g. a patient on the border receiving care from Scotland, or a Northumberland resident in hospital in North Tyneside.

Adult Social Care Panel

- DN explained that Healthwatch Northumberland is chairing the Adult Social Care People's Panel to help design services better.
- DN said the ASC Panel could be a good place to discuss these issues and asked how we could gather together these stories as case studies so senior decision makers could hear them. The group agreed that some case studies may already be available and they would check if there were any that could be passed on.
- DN suggested organisations could come along to the panel meeting or they could produce an anonymous filmed interview.

Enter and View

- Healthwatch Northumberland is planning a programme of Enter and View visits this year. The aim of Enter and View is to get into care homes and talk to residents and relatives.
- The group agreed topics like food, activities, dentistry, podiatry, optometry, audiology and hairdressing are important to cover.
- DN said it is important to build a relationship with the care home provider first before carrying out the visit.
- The visits will focus on one provider which DN will contact in due course.
- DN said HWN is recruiting more volunteers to carry out Enter and View. If anyone knows of anyone who would be interested please ask them to get in touch.

- It was suggested Linda Swindon at the North Northumberland Voluntary Forum would be a good contact for volunteers.
- Carers Northumberland offered to share the opportunity.
- DN will get in touch with the group by email to sound out ideas once she has contacted the provider.
- Two Care Coordinators on the call said they would be happy to make introductions to the care home staff they work with.

Any other business

- The group was asked whether it would be useful for a care home manager to come along to speak at a future meeting. It was agreed that this would be useful as the more information the better, however it might be better to do this at the start of the meeting so there could still be a 'safe space' to discuss issues after they had left.

Next steps

DN said another forum date would be arranged after the Enter and View work has been done.

If any issues arise or if information is needed, please get in touch.