

## **AWB Carers consultation regarding Service Remodel**

**Hosted by Herefordshire Carers Support (HCS)**

**Facilitated by Laura Ferguson**

Consultation meetings – arranged by HCS

08.03.17 – Leominster (15 unpaid carers attended)

14.03.17 – Hereford (26 unpaid carers attended)

27.03.17 – Kington (11 unpaid carers attended)

Attended by commissioning offer- Laura Ferguson

### **Introduction**

Laura set the context of the meeting regarding the proposed reduction in budget to carers support services, and thanks all coming to discuss.

The meetings enabled people to ask questions and express their thoughts about the proposal. It also allowed the context to be set in the light of reduced spend on social care, and the councils position to protect front lines service where ever possible. This will minimise the impact upon carers and the careered for.

The meetings throughout the county had a slightly different feel, but all were underpinned by the message that carers did not want to see the funding to HCS cut and that they valued the service and the support they received.

During each meeting wherever possible each individual was encouraged to express their thoughts on the proposal. This was facilitated in the main, but the larger group in Hereford was time restricted and in each of the meetings where were some more vocal members who dominated the discussions in part.

Initially in all meetings carers challenged the proposal and asked if the decisions had already been made. The process and timescales were clarified and the short timescale acknowledged.

### **Direct quotes from carers at the meetings**

*There is always someone there at the end of the phone*

*I object to being told to self-manage, I already do this as much as I can*

*I am against the cuts*

*I value the support group in Weobley*

*HCS keep me going in my own home*

*I trust HCS, I don't feel alone. HCS are like a family*

*They offer practical advice as well as emotional support*

*I am frightened about what the future holds.*

*I didn't feel listened to on Carers rights day*

*Being a carer can be isolating. The support groups allow me to make friends*

*At the support groups I find out answers to questions I wouldn't of thought to have asked.*

*Its difficult to put a price on the value of HCS*

*They are my lifeline, my safety net*

*Unpaid carers save the council lots of money. How much would it cost if I stopped caring and the council had to pay? Cutting HCS is a false economy.*

*I am concerned about the suicide rate if carer support gets cut.*

*HCS have an open door policy, you get familiar faces and ongoing support*

*They provide training which has really helped me in my role as a carer such as medication, first aid, dementia, Contingency planning, free will writing, etc.*

*I have paid my dues; we shouldn't be the target for cuts*

*Carers give up their life for others.*

*You cant get hold of a social worker, HCS are always there*

## **Questions**

- *What is the cost of carers support per person?*

The current spend is on 4671 carers (2016/7) out of a predicted 20,000 unpaid carers ( 2011 census). This means the value of the contract with HCS is meeting a quarter of the current carer population. The cost of the two current contracts on the population it is reaching means that the current spend is £101 per carer. We know that the target group is four times the current numbers being reached, which reduces the spend per head to £25.25 per person if services reached the target carer audience. This means the current spend is 4 times the allocation per person.

- *The council has been given extra money into the social care budget, why aren't you using this?*

The extra money will be allocated to support specific themes; we are still learning what these are and will be shared with health. It looks likely this will be directed towards supporting the hospital discharge pathway, but we will know more soon.

## **Ideas**

Carers raised a few questions that were directed back to HCS, as follows:-

- Could we pay for membership to keep things going? I don't mind paying to join.
- Could we meet less often but still meet? I already meet with friends I have made through the group in between meetings.

### ***When asked what people value most -***

*The general feedback from this cohort was that direct face to face/ voice to voice services are valued over online services. Support networks, time to talk and be listened to. Time outside of the caring role.*

*Training was also valued, and HSC delivered some specific training (dementia awareness) and acted as a coordinator for training.*

## **Summary of event/ findings**

The services delivered by HCS are very much valued by the people that use the services. The cohort that came to the meetings found value in the meetings and some additional people had come along that weren't regulars to the support groups, but wanted to have a say about the proposed budget reduction.

It is also acknowledged that it was difficult to get time with the carers as meetings were arranged in advance and they already had speakers lined up at venues, however officers made themselves available to attend all meetings offered by HCS and actively sought out these dates.

The consultation event allowed people to better understand the proposal and the process but did little to allay the fear of people attending the meetings. People arrived anxious and did engage in the process, but the theme of self-reliance and resilience was not embraced by the provider and the audience presented more as victims than recipients.

It is clear the current spend is reaching only a few, but those few are anxious about the impact to HCS whom they have a close alliance with.

LJF 28.03.17