

Social Care in the London Borough of Lewisham

SUMMARY IMPACT REPORT

Strategic Drivers and Methodology

The Care Act 2014 sets a list of responsibilities, such as ensuring that people are treated with dignity and respect and as equals. Providers also need to make sure that care is provided in accordance with the individual's needs, and that the assessment takes into account people's preferences.

Healthwatch Lewisham carried out a research project across the London borough of Lewisham looking into the social care needs and experiences of the population. To obtain a comprehensive picture, a mixed methodology was used including an online survey and six focus groups, as well as further work with the Healthier Communities Select Committee. This enabled meaningful interaction with individuals and groups to gather both positive and negative experiences. Our engagement involved detailed conversations and listening.

Healthwatch set out to:

Investigate social care needs and experiences of the local population with a focus on:

- *Accessibility issues*
- *Social care assessments*
- *Care package provision*
- *Quality of care*

Findings

• Support provided by carers and care workers

Support provided by carers and key workers was appreciated and valued. Unpaid carers played a key role in ensuring the health and wellbeing of those who receive social care support.

• Activities

Being able to engage in a variety of activities in day centres was a key topic discussed by people with learning difficulties. There is a need for more variety both in and outside day centres.

• Quality of homecare support

The views on quality of service provided by care workers who support people at their homes were mixed.

• Access

Access to social care services was reported as an issue. People experienced difficulties in contacting services.

• Assessments

It was felt that those in receipt of social care and their carers require a more meaningful input into the assessment, and in some instances felt they were provided with less care than required.

• Consistency and continuity

Consistency and continuity of the care worker was an important aspect of service satisfaction.

• Pressure on unpaid carers

The findings suggest many carers are under pressure and often experience stress. There was a fear that this could result in carers experiencing a deterioration of both their mental and physical health.

Key Recommendations

Healthwatch Lewisham recommends that providers and commissioners within Lewisham incorporate the following recommendations:

- Service users' and carers' experiences and suggestions to be incorporated into the care planning process and throughout their care.
- Clear information and explanation of care options to be made available, as well as eligibility criteria.
- Once a care plan is issued, service users would benefit from detailed information regarding their care providers. Clear contact details should be provided to ensure service users can communicate any relevant changes in circumstances to their care providers.
- Comprehensive training for frontline staff, with a specific focus on treating people with dignity and care.
- Clear timelines and sufficient time frames to be scheduled for home visits to ensure service users' needs are met.
- Streamline telephone access to social care services and reduced waiting times would improve people's experience.
- Where possible, regular respite breaks to be provided for carers to ensure their own health and emotional wellbeing is supported.
- Clear protocol to inform service users of any change in care provision or care worker absence as well as subsequent cover arrangements.
- Clear information to be provided to service users around how to raise concerns and/or complaints about their care.

Local impact and outcome

As a result of our findings London Borough of Lewisham have provided a response based on our recommendations.

“In response to this feedback, we are going to accelerate the work we are doing on the provision of information to service users (about their package of care and relevant contact details) as well as ensure that the concerns raised in this report feed directly into the wider systems improvement work that is also underway.”

**Joan Hutton, Head of Adult Social Care, Community Services,
London Borough of Lewisham**

A summary of key actions are detailed below:

- The London Borough of Lewisham are working on a number of the areas highlighted within the report to hopefully introduce improvements, with a particular focus on information sharing with service users and their families.
- The London Borough of Lewisham is currently focusing on outcomes and quality assurance which should lead to continued improvements in service user experience in the areas highlighted in the report.

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*For a copy of the full report or for further information about Healthwatch, please go to:
www.healthwatchlewisham.co.uk*