

Reshaping Care for Older People



Cassiltoun Housing Association “A Bite & a Blether” Engagement Sessions with Older People in Glasgow

Introduction

In Glasgow, the NHS, social work services, the Third Sector and the independent sector have produced their Draft Joint Commissioning Plan for 2013-2016. The plan sets out a vision for the development of services over the next three years. A city-wide consultation was launched on 15th April 2013 to engage with older people, carers and others, with an interest in the proposals, to discover their views on the plan.

Due to their collective ‘reach’ with older people four organisations received funding from the Change Fund to carry out a series of ‘voice and engagement’ sessions with older people throughout the city. The organisations involved were: Age Scotland; Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector; Scottish Seniors Alliance; and Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations. The aims of the sessions were to introduce older people to the plan and to ask for their opinions on the key issues.

The sessions were branded ‘A Bite & a Blether’ and took place over the period April – July 2013. This report documents key findings from the session held at Cassiltoun Housing Association in Castlemilk.

Cassiltoun HA – 24th June 2013

Background

The session was held at Cassiltoun Housing Association and 8 older people attended. The group was made up of residents of the association who regularly use the facilities and programmes provided for older people by the Housing Association.

The session format included: a short presentation on the key aspects of the Joint Commissioning Strategy; and a short film showing representatives from the four partner organizations and older people talking about the relevant issues. Since the group was small in number the two facilitators decided to hold a ‘roundtable’ discussion which allowed all participants to have their say on each question.

Question 1

What keeps you healthy and well?

- being able to get a doctor’s appointment quickly (our doctor’s surgery line is always engaged)
- coming to the Craft Café – it really helped me feel so much better - before that I was complete isolated
- pensioners action center is brilliant
- having thing do locally

- the Craft Café I've never looked back before this I was never out and felt depressed
- contributing and helping out - that what keeps me well
- keeping busy and having company
- reminiscing with other older people
- having my family around me
- doing community work and volunteering
- having a laugh with your peers
- bus runs are great I really look forward to ours

For all of the participants in the group having amenities and activities for older people provided at a local level was invaluable. There was also a consensus amongst participants that the Craft Café* arts group which operates within the housing association made a difference to their lives. This was described in terms of not only learning new skills and discovering a new appreciation of art; but also in relation to making new friends, connecting with old friends, and crucially with feeling less isolated and lonely.

For this group of older people keeping active and well-connected to both their peers and the wider community were vital in helping them to stay healthy and well. Most of the group were involved in community work and volunteering and had been for a long time.

The majority of the group also stressed the importance of good local health services for older people and some commented on the poor services which they felt they were currently receiving.

Question 2

What works for you if you find you need some help (e.g. if you are unwell, have an accident, or whatever, so you may need help from GP, from social work, from Occupational therapist, physiotherapist)?

- Having a falls clinic in the local community center.
- "Before I started going I couldn't walk the length of myself now I can walk to the community center which is a mile away".
- Physiotherapy however, the waiting times are terrible
- Getting seen quickly by your doctor
- Getting aids and adaptations quickly. One woman said she had to wait for ten months and that more had to be done to improve partnership working between social work, OT's and housing associations

In the discussion around this question the group concentrated heavily on the provision of local health services, and the quality of these. One woman emphasized the difference that attending a local falls clinic had made to her life, particularly for getting 'out and about' and remaining mobile.

The majority of the group stressed the importance of good local health services and also suggested that a more 'joined-up' system could be put in place so that aids and adaptations could be provided more quickly and be easier to access. Participants suggested that different organisations and service providers needed to communicate better with one another for the benefit of older people using their services.

Question 3

What helps you if you need hospital care?

- A good referral system from your own GP
- Good transport services
- Good care in hospital

The group consensus was that if older people need hospital care then the whole process should be as easy as possible for them and also their families and carers. This included getting referred quickly from their own GPs in the first instance. The standard of care received whilst in hospital was also considered very important. Finally, having good transport links to get to and from hospital (for both patients, family members and carers) was considered to be essential by most participants in the group.

Question 4

The draft plan for caring for older people recommends we use hospital services less and do more to support people to live at home. Do you agree or disagree with this? If you agree, what do we need to do differently to make this happen?

- We need to have more Occupational Therapists and nurses based in the community
- We should be giving more control to local communities to have a say in how the budgets are spent e.g. participatory budgeting approaches should be developed.
- having more one stop shops for information and advice to stop older people reaching crisis points
- Taking off the charge for phoning NHS 24 older people can't afford it.
- Do more to encourage men to go to the doctors – go out in to the community “to places like the bookies to do health checks with men”.
- Do more in local chemists to help people with diabetes, high blood pressure etc.

The group strongly agreed with the vision and made several suggestions as to how ‘the balance of care’ might be shifted. As in similar responses the group emphasised the need for good local health services.

One woman who has been closely involved with Cassiltoun Housing Association, in a committee member capacity, and has some experience of participatory budgeting suggested that this approach should be used for local health budgets (with local communities making the decisions about where funding should be spent).

Participants were also keen to point out that particular groups *within* the older population needed to be targeted when it came to health prevention and suggested that older men could be targeted using innovative approaches, by taking health ‘checks’ to them in their communities.

Question 5

The draft plan for caring for older people also recommends we work closely with communities and community based groups and organisations to better support people in need. Do you think this will make a difference? If so what should we be doing to bring this about?

- We need to do more to support local clubs like Castlemilk Pensioners Action center
- Housing association doing more to support local clubs

- Partners need to work closely with housing associations to reach older people
- Planners need to closely link with local projects when changes are being made to services.
- We need local budgets to be steered by local knowledge

Since this group of older people were closely involved in community activities and particularly involved with the housing association this was reflected in their discussion here. Participants stressed the key role that the housing association currently played in reaching out to older people; and also how they would like to see this being developed in the future.

The importance of partners in the NHS and Glasgow City Council recognising the role that local organisations play in supporting older people was also stressed by participants. The importance of local knowledge when it comes to planning services for older people was also emphasised by participants.

Question 6

There are a wide range of services currently supporting older people in Glasgow. Not everyone always knows what services are available. What should we do to improve people's understanding and knowledge about current services and to improve access?

- Need to promote services like the handy person service more and also be clear on who can access it and how.
- "Cordia currently have message on their phone line saying the service is no longer running and it doesn't give information about where to go instead".
- Do more to promote information through housing newsletters
- Promote information through local clubs, doctors surgeries, and housing associations
- Professionals should be giving more talks about services and changes at a local level

There was some discussion about the Cordia 'handy-person' system which participants pointed out was no longer available. Group members felt that older people should have been sign-posted to an alternative service in this case.

Participants felt that making use of local structures and existing community organisations was the best way to improve people's understanding and knowledge of local services and thereby improve access. This included HA's newsletters, displaying information in doctor's surgeries, community centres etc.

(N.B. Participants answers to questions 7 & 8 echoed many of the previous points which had been made and therefore are recorded below without added analysis)

Question 7

What new services should we be developing to meet the future needs of older people in Glasgow?

- A bus service that recognizes the needs of older people
- Well-resourced community activities
- Develop services like the food train for every area
- Invest in model like the craft café

Question 8

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What in your view should be our top priority over the next three years for improving services for older people?

- Community transport
- Having health professional and services such as chiropody and physiotherapy services based locally
- Localizing budgets – adopting participatory budgeting approaches
- Improving waiting list and referral times for aids and adaptations and OT referrals

***The Craft Café is a concept conceived by Impact Arts and piloted in the Castlemilk and Govan areas of Glasgow in Partnership with Cassiltoun and Elderpark Housing Associations. The Craft Café offers a safe, social and creative environment where older people can learn new skills, renew social networks, and reconnect with their communities. There is no charge for attending and it is open to all residents in the areas who are aged over 55.**

**Colleen Rowan
13th August 2013**