

Safe & Healthy People Select Committee

Engaging with Older People

9 February 2010

Focus of the review:

This is a review focused on how Hampshire County Council and its partners engage with Older People.

Review key questions:

1. How are older people **consulted** by Hampshire County Council and its partners currently in regard to:
 - (i) age-related specialist public services planning and delivery?
 - (ii) all other mainstream public services planning and delivery?
2. What are the current mechanisms by which older people can **make comment** to Hampshire County Council / its partners regarding public services? How does this comment inform service delivery?
3. How are the **outcomes** of engagement fed back to older people in regard to:
 - (i) public services they have been consulted on?
 - (ii) public services they have commented on?
4. What **influence**, through engagement, do you think older people have on the planning and delivery of public services?

Conclusions

The below provides the key conclusions taken from the evidence submitted by stakeholders to the review. All written evidence is available on request from the Scrutiny office.

Opportunities for Consultation on Service Planning and Delivery

- A large majority of the consultations reported by stakeholders are paper based (e.g. seeking comments on a strategy, guidance etc). Although paper consultations have popularity with a large proportion of the stakeholders responding to the review, the Eastleigh Southern Parishes Older Persons Forum (ESPOPF) stated that they are overburdened with this form of consultation, which demands from them extensive reading and response time, for which they feel their response is rarely acknowledged and 'much less recognised.' However, the

ESPOPF have reported a multitude of ways in which they have been engaged with successfully, using some of the methods listed below.

- There is a willingness by three of the responding departments within Hampshire County Council to consult where Older People meet (e.g. coffee mornings, social groups, Older Persons forums). However, consulting in this way presumes that the target audience have the facilities to be able to attend such venues. It does raise the question of whether Older People who are not active in this way, or do not have transport to such places, have the same opportunity to be consulted with.
- There were several examples of consultation events and conferences occurring, such as those focused on the Hampshire Model and Older People's Wellbeing Strategy. It was noted by the ESPOPF that although these events rank amongst the most successful in terms of giving opinions and having an influence, the cost of travelling to such events does impede on whether Forum members attend them, as travel allowances are not normally given for such events.
- Those of Hampshire County Council's services that directly deal with (and provide services for) Older People have the broadest range of consultation options open to use, which include:
 - Reference groups that include membership of Older People-related professionals, service users and carers;
 - Day conferences with verbal feedback;
 - Questionnaires and surveys on services;
 - Service user forums;
 - Paper consultations around strategies and national programmes;
 - County roadshows;
 - The use of specifically designed websites.

As services such as these deal with Older People on a regular basis as the users of their services, it is not unexpected that they have the most options for consultation open out of all of those who responded.

- Several respondents reported the use of Older People representatives (such as Age Concern, Alzheimer's Society, etc) rather than service users in order to give them a broader opinion of the wider Older People population. Although this does enable the majority feeling on certain topics to be noted and taken into account, it does not allow for either individual or community voices to be heard.

Opportunities for Comment on Service Planning and Delivery

- The ESPOPF stated that they were not aware of effective current mechanisms for making comment on how services are delivered, and stated that direct contact with officers and councillors would be the method used if needed.

- Hampshire County Council has amalgamated several of its feedback processes into one, which is provided by Hants Direct. This service offers several methods of communication and comment to residents, such as a comments box within the website, telephone lines, customer access points and formal methods of complaint.
- The new County Association of Older People's Forums will have the power to request the presence of an officer responsible for a service run by Hampshire County Council. This will allow representatives of Older People's Forums in Hampshire to question senior officers on how all mainstream and specialist public services are planned and delivered in Hampshire, and to make comment on such services.
- The respondents from the local NHS suggested that the main method of commenting on services by the public was through their elected governors, who could then report these on to the Board of Directors.

Changing the Culture of Consultation

- The Hampshire County Council Older People's Wellbeing Team are working in partnership with other Council departments in order to encourage greater use of Older People's opinions as part of consultations, and promoting such opinions to be 'the norm' rather than an 'add on'.
- The Hampshire County Council Older People's Wellbeing Team also are campaigning to increase the role of Older People's representatives on planning and working groups within the County, ensuring that Older People have a direct and powerful influence on mainstream public services.
- A unique group reported by the Adult Services department is Completing the Circle, which is a service user and carer group that looks specifically at consultation processes within the department, with a view to ensure that minimum standards in consultation are achieved.
- Complaints and patient advice and liaison services were suggested by several respondents as an alternative means of commenting on service delivery. Although this is an informative way of improving service delivery through comment, this method of communication would seemingly only be for making suggestions based on negative experiences.

Feedback from Consultations and Comment

- A majority of the respondents stated that outcomes from consultations is normally in the form of paper – a response document, strategy or letter. This information is then publicised through mediums such as placing documents on websites, in Older Person-focused magazines, or radio stations.

- Some of the respondents noted that they have a legal obligation to write back to service users who make a comment or suggestion within a given timeframe. This ensures that a response is received by the service user in relation to their comments, as well as an indication of how their comments will be used to inform service delivery.
- Several of the largest consultation exercises inclusive of Older People in Hampshire have resulted in strategies or plans that are directly related to Older People-related services. These are clearly shown to have taken into account comment from consultations, and to have fed back to such individuals how they have shaped future service delivery.

Having an influence

- There are examples given throughout the evidence of Older People having shaped how some specialist public services have been designed, such as the Hampshire Model (and personalisation agenda), and how the Council has responded to national consultations, such as the Green Paper on ‘shaping the future of care together.’
- Older People using the Supporting People service have been able to set up a Service User Seal of Excellence (SUSE), which measures the quality of services against service user selected criteria. This enables service users to have a direct influence on the way services are planned and delivered, through assisting in their performance management.

Suggestions for future Older People Engagement

- The broadest range of engagement options, methods to make comment and feedback came from those services within Hampshire County Council that regularly deal with and provide services for vulnerable Older People. The ESPOPF state that they have little evidence of Adult Services moving from engaging with such vulnerable people, to engaging with the Older People population as a whole. They would like to see a move to engaging all Older People on the provision of age-friendly services which assist them in continuing to live independent lives as active citizens.
- The ESPOPF have set out a template for what they would like the process of consultation to be:
 - Discussions prior to service change or launches;
 - Request for comments on emerging ways forward
 - Feedback incorporated into proposals (or explanations as to why this hasn’t happened);
 - Copy of final documents sent to stakeholders;
 - Covering letter on final documents with thanks given and acknowledgement of their contribution.
- The topic of Older People’s Champions was raised by ESPOPF, who suggested that they are an effective link between a Council and Older

People's organisations. They suggest that one individual can not be expected to effectively spread themselves equally around the County in this role, and that consideration should be given to having Hampshire Action Team-related area Older People's Champions.

- In recognition that Older People and voluntary organisations have to fund the cost of travel to engagement activities, thought could be given to reimbursement of travel expenses to such events. This could enable a wider spectrum of Older People to take part.