

OLDER PEOPLE'S STRATEGY CONSULTATION 2011 – MAIN MESSAGES

1. Introduction

West Dunbartonshire CHCP has a strong track-record of engaging and building relationships with older people through existing forums, local and national service users' organisations and carers groups. Within the context of the national Reshaping Care for Older People agenda – particularly in relation to the Older People's Change Fund – and the development of a long-term Older People's Services Commissioning Strategy, the CHCP committed to build on those strong foundations by undertaking a dedicated and comprehensive consultation process throughout 2011.

This ambitious process was designed to engage with service users and carers about how local services are currently delivered across health and social care, as well as what ought to be delivered in the future – and how. It was framed to take account of the increasing numbers of older people and the pressure on statutory services to develop services based on increased demand and decreasing spend. Importantly, it reflected the CHCP's commitment to stimulating an open and on-going dialogue with patients, service users and carers.

2. Process

Recent policy developments have reinforced the need for the approach already undertaken within the CHCP to work closely with our communities to plan, review and deliver localised services. A best practice multi-methodological approach was used to allow people to participate in the consultation process and to be part of the ongoing dialogue with the citizens of West Dunbartonshire (Appendix). The process was also promoted to CHCP staff, so they could encourage participation and contribute themselves.

The CHCP also used the consultation process to begin to open conversations and debates about more challenging topics related to the future delivery of services – e.g. to test assumptions about the delivery of co-production and self directed care. There was also a need to ensure that wider issues affecting older people are included within the debate – e.g. suitability and availability of housing. This debate was challenging, it required all partners to be imaginative and innovation as well as creating an open and honest dialogue about service priorities.

From all the initial pre-consultation preparation with existing stakeholders, the CHCP has had an overwhelming endorsement of this particular community wide consultation process – which importantly provides reassurance about the quality of the main messages that have been identified from it.

Up-dates on the consultation have been provided throughout the process to key groups involved locally. The findings/main messages have been and will be disseminated widely, not least to contribute to on-going dialogue and debate. Those findings/main messages have already been used to inform the development of the CHCP's 2012/13 Older People's Change Fund Plan and the CHCP Older People's Services Commissioning Strategy – and will feed into other emergent work over the coming year ahead.

4. Key Messages

From the analysis of the all of the material shared and collated, the following key themes/messages were apparent from across respondents:

4.1 *Anxieties about getting older*

Respondents from all ages articulated fear and anxiety linked to getting older. These negative perceptions of increasing life-expectancy were primarily related to worries about frailty and illness with an attendant loss of independence.

Older and younger respondents made reference to negative messages about older people and ageing (often unintentionally reinforced by public agencies and other organisations) – e.g. older people as passive recipients of services and as a social burden draining future resources.

4.2 *Local services highly valued – but uncertainty about the future*

While respondents provided a mixture of positive and negative comments about health and social care services, overall a high level of satisfaction with current satisfaction was expressed. Respondents did express the view that in order to make the best use of services on offer, it was important that up-to-date advice and information was widely available; and that people were encouraged to make use of them.

This appreciation for current service provision was also accompanied by concerns about a lack of the “right” health and social care services being available in the future – although for some this was about maintaining what had been traditionally provided, and for others it was markedly about making changes in anticipation of different challenges.

A key insight that resonated across respondents was a recognition of the risks of focusing disproportionate attention on older people’s specialist services as a “magic bullet” for addressing complex demands. A strong view was that many of the needs of older people should be addressed by “universal” community services – as these services should be responsive to the different requirements of all groups within local communities – rather than generating unrealistic and unsustainable demand for specialist provision.

4.5 *The importance of individual and community responsibility*

The majority of respondents - both older and younger - felt strongly that local communities had an important role in supporting older people to live more independently. A repeated point was made about the need for public bodies to identify and limit unnecessary barriers to residents/volunteers helping out in the community.

However older respondents also felt that it was important for people to keep active and healthy to sustain a good quality of life – as fundamentally “living to a ripe old age” should be something that everyone would seek to achieve and enjoy.

Appendix: Consultation Methods

Focus Groups

A programme of focus groups were co-ordinated and hosted with the wider community with invitations to all stakeholders, members of public and community groups/voluntary organisations and other third sector partners throughout autumn of 2011. CHCP staff facilitated seven focus groups, three in Clydebank, two in Dumbarton and one in the Vale of Leven, a separate focus group was facilitated by Carers of West Dunbartonshire specifically aimed at seeking the views of carers.

Focus groups were held within residential and care homes, facilitated by care home staff in order to be able to support the specific needs of residents.

It was agreed the discussions would focus on five areas:

- What does being older mean
- Experience of health and social care services
- Future delivery of older people services
- The role of the community to help deliver health and social care services for older people and
- How older people receive information on health and social care services in West Dunbartonshire.

On – line surveys

By continuing to make up-to-date information available on the CHCP website as well as the new design for the CHCP website having better usability, accessibility and is more visually appealing. A range of E-Questionnaires were set up on the new web site, it was agreed that instead of having one long questionnaire we would have four shorter themed questionnaires.

The themes were:

- About you
- Public information
- Specific care needs
- Who provides for care needs

The questionnaires were also available at public events including the three Fire Stations, open days at Dumbarton, Balloch and Clydebank as well as being available within Council offices and health centres.