

Healthwatch Northamptonshire

A Summary Report on the Domiciliary Care Lay Monitoring Project Phase 2: November 2014 - March 2015

Healthwatch Northamptonshire (HWN), the independent champion for health and social care in the county, has been finding out what people who use domiciliary care and their families think about the quality of this essential service.

Domiciliary care (home care) is received by approximately 4,500 people across Northamptonshire from paid care workers who provide assistance with washing and dressing, meals and help with taking medicines. Of this total number, 2,614 people accessed their support via Northamptonshire County Council Adult Social Care and an estimated 1,886 people purchased a service independently.

Domiciliary care provides people with practical help and support so that they can continue living in their own homes for longer. In recent years there has been an emphasis on providing short term domiciliary care support to enable people to avoid admission to a care home or following a period in hospital. This has been key to helping people regain confidence and skills so that they can undertake personal care and other basic daily living tasks which enable them to be as independent as possible. If longer term support is required, an individual plan is agreed to meet the person's ongoing personal care and wellbeing needs.

In 2014 Healthwatch Northamptonshire worked in partnership with Northamptonshire County Council and published a report finding out the views of service users and carers about home care. The first phase of the pilot highlighted that the demand for domiciliary care will rise as the number of older people in Northamptonshire increases. People aged over 85 are expected to increase from 13,800 in 2010 to 23,900 by 2025. People aged over 65 with dementia in the County, is expected to double the 2010 figure to 14,000 by 2030.

Phase 1 made the following recommendations for Phase 2 of the Pilot:

Conduct face to face interviews with users - in day centres or other community centres.

Conduct face to face interviews with carers - contact has already been made with Northamptonshire Carers about access to a number of carers groups in different localities of the county.

Phase 2 of the pilot involved trained Healthwatch staff and volunteers, talking to individuals and groups face to face around the county.

Healthwatch staff and volunteers spoke to **50** people in total. **39** were direct users of the service, **6** were people in need of services but relied on relatives and neighbours and **5** were carers, or other family members of someone using the service. We involved volunteers in the Phase 2 pilot, who have engaged with community groups, day centres and carers groups, having face to face meetings

with individuals and small groups of users and carers hearing their views about vital home care services.

A report on the 2nd phase has been produced and the key findings are:

Overwhelmingly (80%) of people were either very satisfied or quite satisfied with the care provided by the home care agency within their own home. 88% said they were either very happy or fairly happy with the way the care workers had treated them. Comments received included

“They brighten the day”

“Very happy with the situation”

However, there was considerable concerns about paid care workers not arriving on time, paid care workers seem to be in a rush and not always seeing the same care workers, not being informed by the care agency that a different carer will be visiting. Comments received included:

“Don’t feel I have been given any choice”

“First agency was dreadful, no consistency with carers”

There was concern around home care providers not meeting medication needs (74%) said no they didn’t and (6%) said partially. Comments received included:

“Because of limited hours I don’t always get to take my medication (for osteoporosis) as I need someone with me while I take it and to stay with me”

In response to questions about how much care is received and when care workers came (e.g. 30 minutes, 4 times a week)

(78%) received care every day

(46%) said their visits were between 45 minutes and an hour

(12%) received care between 3 hours and 16 hours per week.

(6%) said some of their visits were 15 minutes long

Both nationally and locally, concern has been expressed about the quality of 15 minute visits to people who may be frail or confused, or to others whose only visitor and person to talk to each day, may be their care worker.

As a result of the findings in the 2nd phase of the pilot Healthwatch Northamptonshire has made several recommendations.

The following areas of significance were noted:

- **Information/Communication processes - particularly in relation to staff absences and changes.** The people we spoke to said they would like consistency and have the same group of care workers, unless they are ill or on holiday

- **Poor communication from the care agency in relation to changes of staffing/timing.** They leave it to the last minute to inform of changes and agencies do not communicate well between each other.
- **Minimum time for home care visits - should be discussed fully, 15 minutes is not long enough:** There needs to be a serious discussion between the County Council and care agencies about the minimum length of a home care visit
- **A review of the support planning/review processes** People using home care services, and their informal carers/family members, need to be more involved in planning the support they receive from home care services to ensure the needs of the person receiving care come first. Regular reviews of needs are essential as peoples care needs will change.