



Strengthening Voices Report
7th July 2016

Introduction

Healthwatch Redcar and Cleveland held their annual event on Thursday 7th July 2016 at Redcar & Cleveland Leisure and Community Heart. The main purpose of the event was to present Healthwatch's third annual report and to gather opinions from the public through workshop activities on how they wanted to engage with the providers of health and social care services. The 'Strengthening Voices' event attracted almost 100 people ranging from service users, family members, carers, service providers and staff from the Clinical Commissioning Groups, Local Authority and NHS England.

Attendees heard four presentations on developments to health and social care in the area. Ian Holtby, Chair of Healthwatch Redcar and Cleveland gave an overview of Healthwatch's work and developments over the last year followed by Dr Janet Walker who gave an update on 'The Better Health Programme'. June Johnson gave a presentation on 'The STAR Scheme' and Councillor David Walsh gave an update on 'Local Developments to Social Care'. Attendees also had the opportunity to ask questions following each of the presentations.



After the presentations, attendees took part in some workshop activities discussing and feeding back information on how they wanted to receive information and be informed of changes as well as how they wanted to feedback their views and experiences to service providers, commissioners etc.

Workshop Activity 1 - How do you want to receive information & be informed of changes?

The most reoccurring themes discussed amongst the attendees at the event was the importance of tailoring communication strategies to the target audience e.g. older people or those who are visually impaired and ensuring that a variety of different communication methods are used, not just one.

A large proportion of the older population do not have access to or know how to use computers and mobile phones therefore emails and information on websites etc. is not easily accessible. For these individuals, preferred methods of communication include; simplified literature including leaflets in the post, adverts and posters in GP surgery waiting rooms as well as individual phone calls. Older people also like to receive personalised information face to face. Other methods popular with the elderly include; information on bus stops and buses, in Post Offices, via domiciliary care workers and through the Older People's Partnership.

It was also highlighted that the use of slogans which are recognisable to the public and captures attention would be a good method to use. It is important that information provided to individuals is eye catching and stands out. Content is required to be simplified and reader friendly without medical jargon and overwhelming amounts of information, as this would make individuals less likely to read / listen to.

The importance of using current resources in the community to target individuals is also vital to inform individuals of changes to services. The use of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector and charitable organisations would be of huge benefit to circulate information and messages so the development of relationships and links with this sector is imperative. By linking in with the VCSE sector, information can easily be passed on by trusted groups and individuals to service users and the public through their services, community groups, newsletters and events.



It is also important to consider advertising and promoting information in areas where members of the public frequently visit which may not directly involve health and social care services. Ideas were raised about displaying posters or holding drop-ins in venues including; shopping centres, cinemas, large chain supermarkets, gyms, cafes, libraries, schools, youth clubs, petrol stations, hairdressers, laundrettes, job centres, churches, community centres/groups, door to door services and on the back of public toilet doors.

There are a number of community newspapers and magazines which reach a large number of people in the community including; Herald and Post, Coastal View, Here & Now, Town Crier etc., the use of adverts and publications in these would also be of benefit when trying to reach the public. Churches and community groups also regularly publish newsletters and e-bulletins which individuals identified as a popular method of communications. Ideas were also discussed about the introduction of a GP surgery newsletter issued to patients providing regular updates about changes to the surgery and wider health and social care services. Another option could be to send out a booklet of information to all homes in the area informing them of local services which they may wish to access in addition to an information section detailing any service changes, news etc. This was a favoured method with the elderly population.

When looking to share information and engage through public events, individuals stressed the importance of choosing the most appropriate venue and time. Individuals who do not drive would require a venue which is on a local bus route and those who work during the day would only be able to attend if these events are planned on an evening.

Better use of GP surgeries, hospitals and pharmacies was also discussed, highlighting that the use of TV's often found in the waiting areas was needed to advertise and provide information to patients. Waiting areas and noticeboards should have leaflets, information and magazines available for people to read about local service changes. In addition to this, better utilisation of frontline staff was also recommended e.g. when a patient visits the GP surgery to pick up a prescription or book an appointment, the receptionist could use this as an opportunity to discuss any relevant changes and provide information and leaflets to patients. Another idea was to recruit 'GP Surgery Champions' whom staff could direct individuals to for more information or for signposting. GP surgeries could also introduce an automated message on the phone line should people wish to ring up to listen to any information, updates or changes to local health and social care services. Events and public consultations could also be promoted in this way e.g. press 1 to find out about local changes in your area. This method would be of benefit to individuals who are visually impaired. GP surgeries could also use members of their Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) to distribute information to patients and the wider public.



When using emails, texts and social media to send and promote information, a method which is highly preferred by young people, it is important that the content is direct and specific to the changes. The information provided should be concise and appropriate to the target audience without the need to follow links to other webpages. Individuals do not like receiving junk or multiple emails about the same topic as this will likely result in individuals unsubscribing from updates preventing them from finding out about important information in the future. A mobile app was also suggested as a way of involving younger people. Individuals would receive regular notifications leading them to find out more information. E.g. James Cook app / GP surgery app which could also be used to notify people of changes to appointments, blood results etc. Photographical barcodes which individuals can scan with their smartphones was also a popular method of communication, these could be placed on prescription bags, posters etc. if people wish to be directed to a webpage to find out more information.

It is hugely important for members of the public to hear information from individuals they trust. This may be their social worker, health visitor, community group lead, carer, community nurse or family member so targeting these individuals would be of huge benefit when sharing information.

Another option to consider when looking to engage with the public would be to use their place of work to promote information or hold an event. Sending emails via organisation networks and links are more likely to be read as they are felt to be more important and trusted. In addition to this, holding an event in an individual's

place of work is likely to have a higher attendance due to the ease of access and convenience.

Engagement with the public must ensure that the needs of the audience are met. Individuals who are visually impaired require information in a format which is clear and easy to understand, in large print or braille and individuals who are hearing impaired would benefit from a British Sign Language (BSL) speaker visiting community groups to share information and changes.

Health services would also reach a large number of people by holding stalls on market days in the local town centre and at car boot sales, craft fairs etc. Promotion of information via TV adverts and local radio stations was also suggested by attendees.



Pharmacies would also be a good service to pass information to. Individuals often stand and wait to collect their prescriptions, the use of posters, leaflets etc. should be displayed and distributed via this service. Leaflets could also be handed out with or placed in prescription bags for patients to read when they get home.

Local community groups, councillors and community agents tend to reach a wide network of people so by ensuring information is passed to these people would be a huge benefit to local health and social care services. It is also important to ensure that minority groups are reached and health services have a good relationship with community groups and services to ensure a good network of sharing information is built and maintained to improve public involvement and understanding.

Workshop Activity 2 - How do you want to feedback your views and experiences?

Members of the public described various ways in which they would like to feedback their views and experiences of local health and social care services, which highlighted that preferences varied depending upon the age group of the individual.

Young people tend to prefer giving feedback online and via social media. Emails and links to online surveys tend to be very popular. When designing questionnaires and surveys, it is important that these are kept 'plain and simple' without medical jargon. In addition to this young people would also recommended using youth clubs and schools to raise awareness and to encourage young people to share their views and experiences. Mobile apps, websites, Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp are also popular with the younger generation and the option to leave feedback and messages via these routes would be favourable especially if individuals were required to vote on a particular topic. The option to send a text message to service providers to give feedback was also an option discussed with younger people.

It would also be useful to have one national feedback service which individuals could report their views, comments or concerns to no matter what service they used or what area this was in. An idea was raised at the event to have a phone line for all services which has an answer phone in place so individuals can ring and leave feedback about the service at a time which is convenient to them. There could also be an automated service put in place for individuals to complete a short survey.

Evaluation forms should be issued to individuals during and immediately after accessing a service so instant feedback can be provided. A number of GP surgeries in the area have touch screen check in systems which could also be utilised as a method to provide feedback. The use of iPads within services as a method for collecting feedback was also discussed as a good idea as it involves technology which is current and easy to use for a large proportion of the population.



Older people tend to prefer to share their views and experiences during public consultations and drop-ins. The ability to share face to face two way feedback in venues such as garden centres, churches, mosques, supermarkets and community centres was also popular with older people.

Postal feedback was also considered to be popular amongst the individuals who attended the event. This allows for people to provide feedback as and when they feel necessary and at a time that is convenient to them. In addition to this, providing feedback through the VCSE sector was also an avenue which should be used to gather feedback. VCSE Groups, community groups, key workers and the fire service are ideally placed in the community to gather feedback from the public. It was also raised that there is a need for a community hub in a central location for individuals to access to find out information about services. For the VCSE sector, it is important to give details of a personal contact in the community who can be contacted with regards to specific campaigns.

Disadvantaged, vulnerable and seldom heard individuals must be targeted appropriately e.g. via social services / domiciliary care workers using a tailored approach to ensure information is available and accessible. Residents of nursing homes and supported living accommodation should be invited to regular 'resident meetings' as a way of sharing information with these individuals.

Sharing information via service provider newsletters would also be a useful method to use. Providing updates with regards to developments to services in the area with the option of feeding back information if individuals wish to do so would also be beneficial e.g. via email address / free phone line.

It is very important for members of the public to feel that they are being listened to and their comments valued, therefore it is essential that there is someone available who they can talk to should they want to share their views and experiences. Quite often people feel that they are unable to speak to their GP surgery about any issues due to the day to day pressures they face e.g.

difficulties getting through on the phone therefore by providing opportunities for patients to leave feedback either face to face or via phone would be encouraged, especially by the elderly population and those who do not have access to the internet. Also, individuals also like to see or hear an acknowledgement that their views are being listened to and reassurance that their feedback is valued and will not impact on the quality of their future care.

Some individuals thought it would be good to have 'neighbourhood champions' who could visit different venues e.g. libraries, markets stalls, voluntary sector organisations, shopping centres etc. to gather views and feedback from members of the public. Drop-ins should be held and comment boxes placed in local health and social care services and in frequently visited locations e.g. supermarkets, churches, cafes etc. so people can give feedback about a service they have used.

When asking members of the public to leave their feedback about a particular topic, the less people involved the better. To help prevent confusion about who is asking what, a 'lead organisation' would be recommended e.g. all feedback goes to this organisation but is then passed on to others who are involved. When members of the public wish to give their feedback it is important this is dealt with in an appropriate manner e.g. if someone walks into a GP surgery to share their concerns then there should be an area or room which has privacy away from the reception desk and other patients.

When asking individuals to give feedback it is important that questionnaires, feedback forms etc. are available in a variety of formats to ensure those who are visually impaired, hearing impaired and have learning disabilities are able to share their views and experiences without having to rely on someone else to do this or simply miss out on the opportunity to do so.



It was also felt that there needs to be more opportunities for individuals to feedback information including workshops and public events which are engaging and interesting. With a heightened presence of these in the community, it would encourage more people to attend and for individuals to feel more comfortable about expressing their views. In addition to this, it is of great importance to instil confidence in the public that their feedback, good or bad, is welcomed, addressed and acted upon appropriately.

Conclusion

Effective communication and engagement with the public is vital in informing, influencing, and proposing changes to local health and social care services. Engaging with the public must involve varying methods of two-way communication and ensuring relationships are built and maintained resulting in a positive impact on public knowledge, involvement and confidence as well as strengthening the reputation of an organisation.

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