

Wandsworth Older People's Forum

Annual Report 2017

Representing and consulting with older people

Continuing austerity has meant that the Council and Health bodies are struggling to meet their statutory requirements and some have had reduced resources for patient and public involvement. **St George's Hospital** has huge past debts but nonetheless our members have reported continuing good clinical service although the transport is considered poor by many who are not mobile. Meetings of the Patients Representative Group have not been held through the 18 month period of special measures. The Forum had a meeting addressed by one of the new directors and one of the Wandsworth governors where we learned about the Trust's programme of improvements and strengthening work to sustain a good quality service. A restart for the regular patient representative meetings was promised but as yet has not happened.

Wandsworth CCG has continued to take its equality and patient and public representation seriously. The Forum attends the Thinking Partners and the PPI Reference Groups. The Commissioning intentions for both local and national NHS are to increase preventive and health promotion services within the community so that patients can be treated at home where possible and, when a hospital stay is needed, appropriate care will be available immediately. Although members support these aims, they have not yet seen significant improvements in the availability of primary care or support at home. Achieving these aims requires close working with Wandsworth Council which is also strapped for cash.

The Community Resilience Project, funded by the CCG and developed by a steering committee that included Forum representatives, produced its halfway report. Five projects providing the kind of preventive services that promote health and well being were funded as a pilot to evaluate the benefit of interventions such as healthy eating, exercise, reduction of social isolation etc. Despite the success of the activities, there will be no further funding for the project in its current form in 2018. The Council is at present consulting on a new way of funding voluntary organisations for promoting healthy living and preventing need for NHS services (see below under Funding). It is hoped these projects may be funded from another source.

Merger of Richmond and Wandsworth Councils

The Forum was informed about the proposed merger and has had speakers at our meetings from several of the officers who cover both boroughs. They also have to maintain relations with Merton as the CCG has joint appointments with that Borough. During the period of change regular meetings between the Council and the Forum executive ceased although one meeting with a senior officer did take place. While this was useful, no plans for future contact were secured.

Working in the wider Voluntary Sector

Representatives of the Forum attend regular meetings of Heath Watch and the Voluntary Sector Forum and this is useful for networking and keeping up to date with what is happening in order to keep members informed.

Funding

Like many other voluntary organisations in Wandsworth, the Forum received our small grant from the Council but with a percentage reduction. This funds the work the Forum does supporting a network of groups working with older people. The reduction meant only organising one instead of two conferences this year. For the future, the Council has decided that it will not fund individual organizations but will fund one 'lead provider' who will take responsibility for funding the other organizations in the borough that provide preventive services for older or otherwise vulnerable adults. Although the Forum does not directly provide preventive services we do provide information

through our meetings and newsletter aimed at keeping people advised about promoting their health and well being. If the proposal goes ahead, the Forum will have to decide whether or not to be part of a joint bid with other local providers and a lead organization. The whole project is currently out for consultation and the Forum has expressed our opposition to the approach, because we are concerned about a) increased distance between voluntary sector providers and the statutory sector and 2) the lack of a suitable organization in Wandsworth to play the lead provider role.

Monthly Meetings

The Forum has maintained its monthly meetings with speakers on various local services: air quality, My Life which makes life story films for people with dementia, police and fire brigade about keeping safe, Action of Hearing loss and Trading Standards. In addition to our members, the Forum sends out information updates and invitations to meetings and events in the Borough to all older people's organizations in the borough, frequently to those who have provided an e-mail address and less frequently by post to those who have not. Postal invitations to Forum meetings were sent twice to all the 100 or so organisations for older people. We had a workshop meeting on using the internet and we heard from the Health Watch Enter and View team that Wandsworth residential and nursing homes offered a lower quality of care than those in Richmond. The Forum will be following the progress of those Wandsworth homes that required improvement.

The Newsletter

The Forum newsletter has appeared quarterly with 200 copies sent by post to members and the remainder of 4,000 print run sent to care homes, sheltered housing complexes, libraries, day care centres and other places where older people might see it. It is also posted on the Forum website. Unfortunately, City Bridge funding for the printing and distribution of the newsletter runs out in March 2018. Two further funding applications have been made but we do not yet know the outcome

Conference

Human Right for Older People was the subject of an Older People's Network conference held in October and very well attended. As a result the Forum will be publishing a leaflet to publicise these rights which will be distributed widely to older people in Wandsworth. In particular it will inform them of their rights to be treated with dignity and respect by all health and care services and advise them of how to report breaches.

Forum governance

The Forum's constitution was reviewed and the minor changes were accepted by the Charity Commission. The Forum's policies have been reviewed and updated. The Forum is working with a consultant to consider the Forum's future in the light of the changing approach to funding, the increased use of technology and the current age profile of the committee and membership. The Forum's committee meet monthly and discusses a wide range of subjects relating to services and activities in the Borough and how the Forum should intervene.

Lilias Gillies

January 2018