

## Co-designed Information Resource for Home Care Customers

September 2018

### Disclaimer

*This report is based on conversations or responses freely given by members of the public. Where possible quotations are used to illustrate individual or collectively important experiences.*

*Engagement officers collect responses verbatim and we also present these in our final report as an appendix. This is important in showing the accuracy of our analysis, and so that further work can be done by anyone wishing to do so.*

*A full explanation of the guiding principles and framework for how we do engagement and analysis can be found online on our website [www.healthwatchbolton.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchbolton.co.uk).*

### Background

As part of their new Home Care Quality Improvement Programme Bolton Local Authority have worked with some representatives of home care services to try to understand why relationships between service providers and clients are sometimes difficult. They have identified misunderstandings about the operational practices of home care services as one of the issues, and propose a standard information sheet explaining the most commonly misunderstood features of the service. The fact sheet is to be co-produced with home care service users and Healthwatch Bolton was commissioned to facilitate this process.

This work is commissioned by Older People's Services within Bolton Local Authority. It fits within our broad priorities of supporting improved communication between customers and providers of health and care services.

Healthwatch Bolton is committed to promoting and supporting co-design among commissioners and providers and happy to work with organisations and programmes to facilitate co-design.

## Key Findings

People welcome an easy to understand information sheet they can take away, which can help them to navigate setting up care packages for themselves or a loved one.

People have varying levels of understanding of the terms used- an info sheet will help people to understand what they are negotiating.

People want this resource at the beginning of their journey- as soon home care is mentioned.

Managing expectations and clear communication is key to establishing a successful relationship between customer and provider.

## Methodology

Bolton Council older people's team sent out a letter to those receiving home care and their families inviting them to get in touch with Healthwatch Bolton if they wished to participate in developing a customer friendly information document for home care customers. The same letter was sent out by Healthwatch Bolton to its members. This initial appeal did not generate any leads.

Healthwatch Bolton engagement officers and Bolton Council officers then approached known contacts who had received, or were in receipt of, home care services.

Engagement officers used a conversational interview approach. These were conducted in a location most convenient to those taking part, often in their own homes and one over the phone.

## Who we spoke to...

Healthwatch Bolton engagement officers spoke to 19 people in total. These were a mix of the cared for and their family member or carer.

We conducted

- 6 interviews in people's homes
- 1 phone interview
- 1 group discussion at a Dementia Carers Support Group with 12 people in attendance

## When should information about home care be shared?

Negotiating home care for a loved one can be a very frustrating, scary and emotional time. The people we spoke to wanted to receive written information as soon as possible, often at first mention of any care package needing to be put in place.

*“At the earliest possible time when the first conversation about the possible use of home care takes place, so a decision can be taken on whether home care is the right route for that person or family”*

*“The information should be given to customer/families while the service user is still in hospital so they have time to ask questions and clarify their position before they get home.”*

This would enable them to digest and reflect on information and they could use the fact sheet to direct future conversations.

## Who should have access to the information?

People felt it was important to recognise everyone who played a role in the caring process. The person receiving the care is central to the process but is often supported by family or friends. Primary carers felt that additional care packages should be considered as piece of the puzzle therefor all involved should have access to the same information.

*“The cared for if appropriate but definitely the loved ones, the primary carer or the person who makes the decisions for the cared for.”*

*“The client should receive the information irrespective of whether they understand it, it offers dignity and shows that the individual is included in the conversations. The family/carer/friend, whoever is the decision maker for that individual should also receive a copy”*

## How do people prefer to receive information?

Written information- something to take away but available in other formats- braille, audio, different languages and online for those who request.

- Plain language
- Simple and easy to understand
- Some pictorial signs
- Clear layout

## What information do people expect?

People we spoke to used the opportunity to feedback about the service in general and Healthwatch Bolton engagement officers guided the conversation to extract

particular points of confusion or contention. From these we have suggested specific information which should be included against each heading. We have included some verbatim quotes to illustrate the information requests.

People felt that all of the suggested headings were really important and had potential to create difficulties when negotiating home care packages. Some of these topics were particularly emotive for some of the primary carers. This proposed resource would be a useful information document which could help to manage expectation and manage relationships between the customer and provider.

## Specific information requested against each proposed heading suggested by provider:

### Explanation of homecare managed by the Council (managed account) and the paperwork in the home

- What home care is and what can be expected
- Background about the provider
- Standards and Quality Rating

*“Written information would be useful as I was only given verbal information”*

*“If you have never used care services then what the term home care means needs explaining.”*

### What to expect from the provider on the first visit

- An explanation of what will happen on the first visit
- Getting to know the person who is being cared for and the people involved in their care ( family, friends)
- Managing expectations
- Descriptions of process and procedures

The people we spoke to had strong expectations about what should happen at the first visit and how this should be managed.

*“I would have wanted to know if there would be 2/3 regular carers or is it going to be lots of different people visiting”*

*“You want a sympathetic ear, an assessment of needs and talk about what can and can’t be done. Nobody ever mentions dental care, shaving etc. and it’s very important. The client and family need to know the carers so an introduction to at least one of the team”*

## Time bandings

- Detailed explanation of what time bandings are
- What effects the bandings
- How to use bandings to get the best results for the person being cared for

People felt confused and frustrated by the bandings.

*“It took some time and any complaints by myself before I understood about the bandings and could work the best pattern out for my mum”*

*“Information on the time bandings is definitely a priority. You can be waiting, thinking the carer is late if you do not understand the time bands.”*

## Cancelled visits (24 hour notice on charging policy)

- Explanation of policy
- Examples of when the policy applies

Most of the people we spoke to were unaware of this policy, suggesting there is a need for clarity.

*“I didn’t know about this so some written information would be helpful”*

*“I didn’t know about this and it hasn’t been relevant to us up to now, but it would be useful to be told this at the beginning.”*

## Temporary suspension of service - periods of unplanned hospitalisation, and service user charges

- Detailed examples of when this would apply
- Clear instructions of who to speak to and when
- Any wider implications this may have for the provider or the client

*“I had no idea, but it should be in the information so the customer understands why their care provider may change.”*

*“I have never understood this so the information should be clear within the document”*

## Who to contact if you have concerns regarding the delivery of the service

- List of contacts and who to contact for what

*“When I was using the service I did know who to contact but I wasn’t always impressed with how my concerns were dealt with”*

*“I know to ring the agency but this needs to be clear for the people who do not know”*

### **Treating you with respect and treating your carers with respect**

- A policy statement
- Code of conduct or expectations from both parties
- What happens if this is not being adhered to

People felt this was an obvious thing to expect for both the carers and those being cared for but that this section could be a useful reminder.

*“Absolutely a must”*

*“This should always be the case and people should know who to contact and how to complain if not.”*

### **Payments - chargeable by the minute and a minimum of 15 minutes. Who to contact with invoice queries**

- Information about charges which allows customers to check their invoices for accuracy on receipt
- Breakdown of all costs and what they include e.g. is paper work time included
- Contact details for queries

*“Yes there needs to be an explanation of charges so you can understand your bill when it comes”*

*“This needs to be made very clear so that this can be checked against the invoices. People need to know upfront what they are paying for. Don’t assume they know.”*

### **Use of the telephone, Freephone number, or smart phone method, links to electronic call monitoring**

- Explanation of monitoring methods used
- Explanation of how to check and engage with the system

*“An explanation of what system is used would be helpful and it may be helpful to explain if carers are given time to do paperwork or whether that is included in the caring time”*

*“Explanations would help but all means of checking in and logging should be fool-proof”*

### **Minimum visit time of 15 minutes**

- What this means
- Why it is enforced
- Examples of what can be expected to be completed in that time

*“This is something you are told but may be helpful to have in writing”*

*“An explanation would be useful”*

### **Changes and ending care packages (terminations)**

- Examples of changes which need to be communicated
- Outline of any process which happens following a change or termination
- Contact details

*“I would presume you do this through the social worker but I don’t really know so some information would be helpful”*

*“No-one was what sure what they should do, whether to ring the office, tell the carer etc. so information should be included and it needs to be clear”*

### **Extended breaks for holidays etc.**

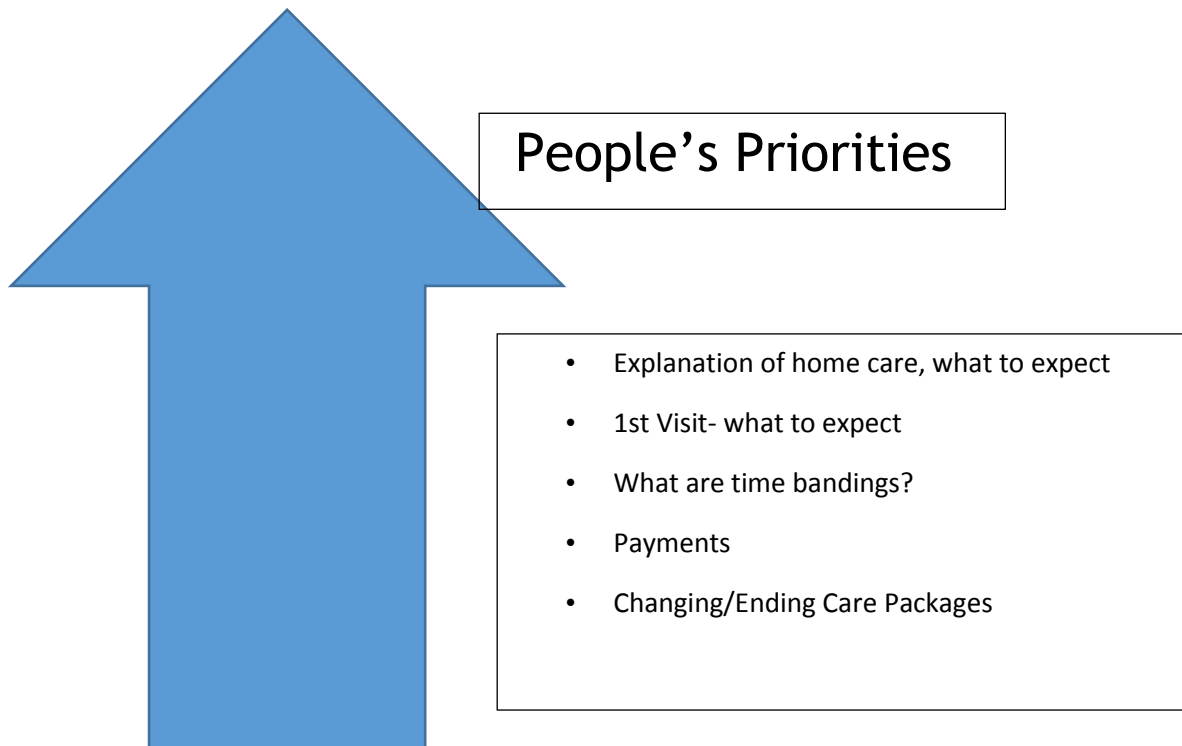
- Explanation of what is considered an extended break
- Process to be followed
- Contact details

*“This is something I hadn’t even thought about so this information would be really useful to many service users and their families.”*

*“This does need to be explained as it may affect the family’s decisions”*

### **Other useful information that could be included....**

- What happens in an emergency? Information on what will happen if carers arrive and there is a problem with the client
- Handling medication- what to communicate and with who, particularly if there is a temporary change in medication
- Staff training and care standards
- Policy on gifts for carers



People had different understandings of the same headings and different expectations. We asked everyone who participated to list their top 5 headings in order of priority and most agreed that all were equally important and often interlinked and impacted on each other.

“Cannot prioritise the above as they are all equally important to me”

For those who expressed a priority- a clear explanation of what the provider does and what to expect and an overview of the 1<sup>st</sup> visit, and clarity on time bandings were the most important factors.