

Voices on Domiciliary Care



from Day Care Centres in Buckinghamshire

Feb - March 2016

1. Executive Summary:

Introduction

Healthwatch Bucks staff and volunteers arranged 4 visits in advance, between February 3rd and March 3rd 2016, to four day care centres in Buckinghamshire. Unfortunately, both Aylesbury and Buckingham Opportunities Centres both cancelled our visit with one working days' notice and there was no time to reschedule. The aim was to collect voices of dignity in care in relation to domiciliary care.

Summary of key findings and Recommendations

During our two visits to The Princes Centre and one to Chesham Opportunities Centre, we talked to 9 elderly individuals in receipt of domiciliary care. We were surprised how few elderly individuals were (a) at each day care centre and (b) in receipt of domiciliary care; only 10% on average of those present.

We were told:

- Carers were more often than not late for appointments and those in receipt of care did not feel enough time was given to allow for personalised care.
 - **We recommended Buckinghamshire County Council and the care agencies review the time each task takes a carer and build in sufficient time for assistance to be given in a dignified way.**
- Very few of those who we talked to had less than two carers a week; some had six.
 - **We recommended that there should be a rethink about how cover is provided when carers are sick or on holiday. Those requiring care should receive care from a smaller group of carers to allow for greater consistency of care overall.**
- No one told us that they ever received any calls from the agency office on any matter and all communication was via the individual carer or not at all.
 - **We recommended care agencies should be encouraged to communicate more effectively with those in receipt of care in particular when staff are off sick and alternative carers are needed**
- Almost all of those we spoke to did not know who they could complain to
 - **We recommend better information is provided on the complaints process for domiciliary care**
- This was a very succinct project, over a very short time frame, which tried to reach those who had not already been reached by SUCO or The Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee in 2015 when they looked at the same subject. As such, it collected few voices and cannot be said to be representative on a quantitative basis of those in receipt of domiciliary care in Buckinghamshire.
 - **We recommended Buckinghamshire County Council undertake a wider project on domiciliary care to gather relatives views on domiciliary care provided as well as the views of carers' experiences of providing care to establish what issues they face.**



2. Background

Buckinghamshire County Council has commissioned Healthwatch Bucks to report on the way that dignity is considered where domiciliary care is provided in Buckinghamshire. The aims of the project are to:

- Give service users and their carers a voice about their views and experiences of dignity
- Make recommendations for improvements and highlight good practice
- Publically share information to help people make choices about the care they may need

A piece of work had already been undertaken by SUCO and the Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee in 2015 on this subject so we have tried to reach those who might not have been interviewed by organisations recently.

3. How we have done this

Healthwatch Bucks staff and volunteers arranged 4 visits in advance, to four day care centres across Buckinghamshire. These were The Princes Centre, Aylesbury Opportunities Centre, Buckingham Opportunities Centre and Chesham Opportunities Centre. These were scheduled between February 3rd and March 3rd 2015 with the aim to talk to those who received domiciliary care. Unfortunately, both Aylesbury and Buckingham Opportunities Centres both cancelled our visit with one working days' notice and there was no time to reschedule.

We used a questionnaire (see Appendix 1) to collect experiences of care at home and recorded what we were told. Healthwatch Bucks visits are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues. However, if safeguarding concerns arise during a visit they will be reported to Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Adults Board. None were raised in relation to any visit in this report.



4. What we found



During our two visits to The Princes Centre and one to Chesham Opportunities Centre, we talked to 9 elderly individuals in receipt of domiciliary care. We were surprised how few elderly individuals were (a) at each day care centre and (b) in receipt of domiciliary care; only 10% on average of those present. Many lived with relatives who provided all their care needs and a few looked after themselves. Of those who had paid for care at home, many did not know the name of the agency who provided care although they did know the name of the individual carers. Some individuals who were in receipt of domiciliary care were living with dementia and not able to give us any information.

When carers visit

“No, I don't have a choice”

Most of the individuals we spoke to had carers visit in the morning and evening to assist with getting dressed, personal care and going to bed. Two ladies had carers in four times a day to help prepare meals as well. Only one person told us that they had any choice about exactly what time the carers visited. They said that they told the carer that they didn't want to go to bed at 6pm so carers now visit at 9pm instead.

“I have been with this agency (x) years; it's better the devil you know.”

Consistency of Care

“Six different carers in the last seven days.”



We were told that there is more regularity in the mornings about who comes to give care rather than in the evening. Some individuals had employed an individual as a carer rather than going via an agency and therefore always had the same carer. Most, however, usually had between two and four carers in a week but one person did tell us that there had been “six different ones in the last seven days”. All of those we spoke to said that their carers would tell them when they were going on holiday, but that they often wouldn’t know who would be visiting in their place; “they just turn up”. When an agency carer was sick, “no one tells us” beforehand and so individuals in receipt of care sometimes have to accept a stranger into their house.

The agency “don’t give a damn”

Carers were more likely to be on time in the morning than in the evening. Only one person said their carer always turned up on time. However, one person said “times change depending on who else they see”. Another said “I wouldn’t mind if they were late, if they’d just call”. Many felt “a bit agitated” if their carers were late as they were unsure if anyone would turn up although they always did.

“I would like more done but am frightened to ask”

Is care personalised?

Many told us that they did not like personal care being provided by a member of the opposite sex but didn’t get a choice when this happened. Some had got used to this whilst others refused the care given. All were grateful for the care they received but 65% found their care was rushed with barely enough time for everything to be done never mind any time to chat. The carers, on the whole “are nice, good people” but they only have so long for each visit. Many people we spoke to also had children locally who visited them daily in addition to the carer. It was the relatives who took them out or got the shopping and did all the things that hadn’t been by done by the carer. However, some carers had formed a close bond with the person they assisted. “She treats me like family; she brings me flowers and cakes. She will do anything for me.”

“(the carer) will get stuff for me but I would like to be taken out”

Do you feel safe?

Everyone told us that they felt safe with their carers; both physically and emotionally. However, one person, who required two carers visiting at a time, did find it intimidating when carers spoke to each other in their native tongue rather than in English in front of them. Everyone said they felt treated with dignity and respect. “No complaints that way”. One lady said she found it comforting to see someone first thing in the morning and looked forward to seeing her carer. Another told us that the carer checks how she is and knows her so well that “she can tell if something’s not right with me”.

“they take good care of me”

Are you listened to?

“I wouldn’t know who to complain to”

Whilst everyone we spoke to felt they were listened to within the constraints of short visits and too much to do in the time available, only one person knew how, or to whom, they should make a complaint should they want to. Some said they would be confident enough to make a complaint whilst others said they would get their relatives to do this for them. One gentleman did tell us he “felt abandoned” but another lady said about her care “I am a lucky person”.

“Sometimes they can’t understand what I want because they’re English is not very good”

Recommendations

- **Buckinghamshire County Council and the Care Agencies need to review the time each task takes a carer and build in sufficient time for assistance to be given appropriately.** Enough time needs also to be built into any carers schedule to allow for travel. This would facilitate more personalised and dignified care. We were told consistently by those we spoke to that care was rushed and /or carers were late.
- **Each individual should be given care by as few carers as possible** which would allow for greater consistency of care overall.
- **Agencies should be encouraged to communicate more effectively** with those in receipt of care in particular when staff are off sick and alternative carers are needed
- **Provide better information about how to complain about domiciliary care.** Almost no one we spoke to knew anything about this process including who any complaint should be made to.
- **Undertake a wider project on domiciliary care** to gather relatives’ views on domiciliary care provided, as well as carers’ experiences of providing care to establish what issues they face. It is recognised that new contracts to provide domiciliary care have just been awarded from April 1 2016.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank everyone we met at The Princes Centre and Chesham Opportunities Centre for welcoming us and sharing their experiences of domiciliary care and the staff at these locations for facilitating our visits.

Our reports are not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all those in receipt of domiciliary care in Buckinghamshire, only an account of what we told when we visited these particular locations.



Appendix 1 - Domiciliary Care Questionnaire

Location:			Date:		
Individual's Name:			Care Provider's Name:		
When do your carers visit?	morning	lunch	afternoon	evening	other
Comment					
Do they stay long enough to do all the things they need to?	always	sometimes	rarely	never	
Comment					
Do they visit when you want them to?	always	sometimes	rarely	never	
Comment					
Are they on time?	always	sometimes	rarely	never	
What impact does this have on you?					
Do you usually have the same care workers unless they are ill or on holiday?	always	sometimes	rarely	never	
Comment (how many different ones in last month?)					
Are you told if your carer worker will be not the usual person?	always	sometimes	rarely	never	
Comment (what about if they're going to be late etc?)					

Do you feel that you have a choice in relation to your care?	always	sometimes	rarely	never	
Comment (involved in any planning?)					
Are you the centre of your care? Do they treat you as an individual?	definitely	most of the time	rarely	never	
Can you give me an example of why you said that?					
Do you feel listened to if you have any issues or concerns?	definitely	most of the time	rarely	never	
Comment (do they know how to make a complain i.e. to agency and then to BCC if necessary)					
Do you feel treated with dignity and respect?	definitely	most of the time	rarely	never	
Can you give me an example of why you said that?					
Do you feel safe when your carers visit? (physically, emotionally etc)	definitely	most of the time	rarely	never	
Comment					
Would you like to tell us anything else about your care?					