

Devon County Council

LinkAge Plus

Broad Outreach 'No door is the wrong door'

We used an action learning approach supplemented by focus groups to test the assumption that a 'one door' model of access to information and services (e.g. telephone access to a holistic information service such as Care Direct) would have limits for some older people. We worked with a wide range of staff and volunteers in pilot sites across the County to explore a 'broad outreach' model of face to face access through their experience in order to learn what would help them make 'no door is the wrong door' for older people to knock on for access to information and services.

Broad Outreach

‘No door is the wrong door’

Objective

- To find better ways of linking older people with the information and services they require.
- To test a single ‘Devon Gateway’ that will expand the range of information available through the existing telephone service (Care Direct; now integrated into My Devon Customer Service Centre) for all localities in Devon.
- To seek to partner with the whole range of statutory and voluntary agencies operating with older people in the pilot localities to ensure the networked front end (the network of front line staff and volunteers) provides a holistic service to meet the needs of older people – ‘no door is the wrong door’.
- To run a series of 8 listening and information events for older people with a minimum attendance of 800 people.

Activity

- We introduced a set of tools – the 360 degree well being checklist based on the ‘Sure Start to Later Life’ report of the Social Exclusion Unit – to frontline staff and volunteers and explored their usefulness to them. We ran a series of information fairs across the county, to provide information to older people locally on services offered, as well as develop local networks of services.
- Resource and training were invested in the Devon customer service centre in using the 360 degree tool for the holistic assessment of older people’s needs.
- We created an Internet portal for information and service access.
- We talked with and took feedback from people coming to the information fairs – information providers and older people.
- A series of focus groups were run with statutory and voluntary services and information providers across the county to test our assumptions and expand our learning.

Achievements against objectives

- We exceeded our objectives – we ran 11 information fairs and were in fact in touch with around 3,000 people at face to face events, including Senior Council meetings.
- We achieved our learning objectives, and are confident of the learning having had it generally confirmed through repeated feedback, survey forms and focus groups.
- We achieved the development of the Internet Portal as a sustainable information resource.

Wider achievements

The information fairs provided valuable, and very welcome, opportunities for networking and linking local service groups as well as the broader awareness of services available.

We have secured the future of information fairs. The County Council and the Devon PCT have made a contractual agreement with the new Senior Council to continue these; pilot staff are supporting this development.

DCC, the PCT and the Senior Council are looking to continue the 360 degree well being checklist.

Resources

£22k to develop the framework and website and produce marketing tools.

£1.3k for communications & publishing.

£21k for advertising, setting up and running Information fairs (eight events).

This does not include all Pilot staff costs.

Key lessons learned

- Older people often referred to the desirability of the provision of things that were already available – underlining the need for good information provided in an accessible way.
- Although a single source of comprehensive information and support is necessary (Care Direct, My Devon Customer Service Centre) it is not in itself sufficient for older people to have easy access to information and services.
- Many older people do not naturally turn to call centres for information.
- Most older people attending our events were unaware of the Care Direct/My Devon telephone service. Funnelling all information requirements through that service would not be likely to be successful or sustainable.
- Many older people often find telephoning an ordeal, and do not like to speak to someone they think is not local.
- Many older people would not or could not use the internet for information – usually in the older age ranges.
- Many older people often turn to someone they trust, for example a GP or nurse - who may not recognise the approach or be equipped to deal with it if they do – a ‘closed - or ‘wrong’ – door’.
- Front line staff and agencies do not know of each others’ work to the extent they themselves consider useful in many cases. Feedback establishes that they found networking at LinkAge Plus information fairs very useful indeed.
- The tools we used to help staff and volunteers explore their experience - the 360 degree well being checklist ‘Getting the Most Out Of Life’, the linked website and publicity materials – have been well received. In this workstream, people working in the health

and social care field, and using our tools, have realised that their model of what 'holistic' means is partial when measured against older people's real information and service needs.

- We need to do more to help front line staff and volunteers when older people approach them – for example, we are working on a simple enquiry service that will ensure an older person gets called back.
- We believe our pilot has demonstrated that unless everyone working with older people is equipped some of the most vulnerable older people will not have their information and service needs met. Everyone working with older people need: 'An awareness of a 360 degree framework; an information competence' as part of standard occupational requirements.
- There are major obstacles to getting services or information to people who need them in rural areas – this includes distance and transport - these are difficult and expensive to overcome.
- To support front line staff and volunteers, local organisations need to be part of a 'network' which supports their needs for access to and competence with information resources. A local 'hub' – a designated voluntary agency given specific support for this function – could help here. If such a natural 'hub' does not already exist, the network of local agencies probably needs development too. In such cases, we believe a 'hub' should be identified and encouraged.

Further information

Contact: Greg Warner, LAP Programme Co-ordinator, Devon Pilot, The Annexe, County Hall, Exeter EX2 4QR

Email: gregory.warner@devon.gov.uk

Tel: 07794 072810

Ref to website:

Over 50's website: http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/socialcare/older_people/over50s.htm

Getting Most Out of Life website: http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/socialcare/older_people/over50s/gtmool.htm

Related documents

Summary of Devon Broad Outreach Focus Groups Learning http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/socialcare/older_people/linkageplus.htm