

Dementia Challenge Conference

Winter Gardens on 3rd November 2014

Workshop Valuing Your Voice - Improving Local Services

Eileen Jacques, Chief Officer of Healthwatch North Somerset, Anne Rollings, Dementia Lead North Somerset Community Partnership and Denise Perrin, West of England Rural Network Village Agent led a workshop at the Dementia Challenge Conference at the Winter Gardens on 3rd November 2014 entitled Valuing Your Voice - Improving Local Services.

The workshop was supported by Mike and Lynn, a dementia sufferer and carer who shared their experiences of the diagnosis of dementia and their subsequent experiences. Their contribution to the workshop was illuminating and their positivity was humbling.

A large number of people in the workshop had first-hand experience of dementia through family or friends and many of them shared and raised the following recommendations to improve services for dementia services:

- Improve awareness with GPs that dementia can occur at younger age - an example was given of a diagnosis of dementia taking 3 years due to age; 57 was considered too young.
- Many people with dementia feel isolated but it is good to socialise with people without dementia eg walking groups, activities.
- Including people diagnosed with dementia in relevant workshops / meetings enables patient / carer feedback and can influence service provision.
- Partners in Primary Care do not work effectively together.
- The services for dementia care are not joined up.
- There is a need to understand that there are some barriers in North Somerset that are causing the services to not be working together effectively.
- GPs are not listening to family members and this is causing time being wasted in getting a diagnosis.
- Family members are the experts and this should be acknowledged.
- There are no mechanisms to influence dementia services in North Somerset.
- In 1994 the dementia service system was effective but it has regressed, although there are still some examples of good practice.
- An example of good practice was a good level of support from a GP after diagnosis who rang the family every few months to check on progress. The family felt well supported.
- It is important to recognise the input of and effect on carers.
- Carers support groups can enable carers to talk about and share their problems.

- There are activity groups available for dementia sufferers but not all sufferers can attend. Development of services that bring activities to the individual at home would be very welcome.
- GPs are not currently working with agencies to improve diagnostic rates.
- GP training in dementia should be encouraged as not all take up the training.
- GPs do not always read patient notes and are therefore are not always aware that a patient attending surgery has been diagnosed with dementia.
- Quicker diagnosis of dementia is encouraged along with relevant support and information immediately after diagnosis. People can be left in limbo after diagnosis and fear the worst.
- Everyone in dementia services are pulling in different directions - this needs to be joined up so that they work together.