

# Carer Engagement 2017

## Summary

Carers are invaluable to our health and social care network. They are our experts by experience. In Croydon, there are 33,683 carers, which makes up 10% of the total population of Croydon. Approximately 42% of carers in Croydon are male and 58% are female. The majority of carers are aged between 45 and 64 years old (ONS, 2011), Carers in Croydon save the local economy an estimated £654 million per year (Bucker & Yeandle, 2015). In 2015, the State of Caring survey reported that 82% of carers report that caring negatively impacts on their health (Carers UK, 2015). Providing support to carers is the best way to help prevent a care breakdown, which can result in an emergency admission for the cared for person and/or the carer (RCGP, 2013).

### Objectives

To identify the needs of carers in Croydon

To understand what we are doing well in Croydon for carers

To identify areas for improvement to carer services, and what we should focus on over the next year

To support the development of the Carers Strategy 2017 – 2021.

### Methods

Two methods of data collection were utilised: an online and paper survey and seven focus groups. These were co-designed with the support of the nine carer organisations in Croydon. To increase uptake, the nine carer organisations disseminated the online survey link out to their client databases. Of the focus groups six were conducted in existing groups to ensure that carers who may not usually attend engagement events were heard. These groups were: black and minority ethnic carers, young adult carers, carers of someone with a mental illness, carers of someone with a learning disability, and a group of mixed carers. This was then followed-up with an additional focus group at the Carers' Support Centre with a mixture of carers.

### Results

322 people participated. Of these, 262 people responded to our online / paper survey, and 60 carers attended the seven focus group sessions. When asked to state the three types of support that had the greatest impact on a caring role in the past 12 months, the top three were: a break from caring (45%), having a friend or relative who is able to help (38%), and having health professionals that listen and understand their caring role (33%). This is a slight change from the 2015 survey which showed the top three types of support were; benefits (44%), and break from caring (48%), and having the right information available (35%).

What we are doing well in Croydon:

**Carers services**

*"The carers information centre is fantastic"*

**Respite / respite provisions**

*"Support groups and respite support"*

**Good signposting**

*"Lots of signposting - been given lots of leaflets, details of support groups etc"*

**Training or education for carers**

*"Coffee mornings, training and support groups."*

**Counselling**

*"The counselling service is excellent. Plus it holds evening sessions"*

## Recommendations

1. To provide more flexible opening times for carer support services
2. To provide services for carers in different areas of the borough
3. To provide equitable financial support for carers
4. To have more access to a break from caring e.g. activity days or affordable respite provision
5. To provide carers with more support in employment e.g. promote flexible working, provide a carer support group for working carers
6. Better promotion of the current services for carers in the borough
7. To provide support for carers after their caring role has ended
8. Feedback to the CCG the issues relating to IAPT services in Croydon
9. Work with GP practices to identify carers earlier
10. To promote the commissioned services clearly stating that they are funded by Croydon Council
11. To work with the hospitals in Croydon to enable better communication during patient discharge
12. To provide one-to-one support and group activities for young adult carers and promote awareness of young adult carers to the local colleges and sixth form colleges.
13. For health, social care and all council staff to have a better understanding of a caring role
14. To provide carer assessments and financial support to parent carers of someone under 18 years

### Next steps...

1. Supporting providers to implement the recommendations from this report where possible

2. Working with colleagues to implement the recommendations from this report where possible

3. Updating the work plans of the relevant staff in the council

4. Using the information presented to inform and develop the Carers Strategy 2017 - 2021

5. Continuing to work with carers to shape services in Croydon

With thanks to the carers in Croydon who contributed to the survey and /or the focus groups and for the carer organisations in Croydon for supporting this work.