

Kingston BME Forum

28 March 2008, United Reform Church

Charlotte Fitzgerald (CF) spoke to the Independent and Wellbeing Strategy.

This strategy is intended to support individuals who would no longer be receiving statutory care services due to the changes in the eligibility criteria for community care services. The aim is to ensure that everyone who needs low to moderate level of support is able to have their needs met in a variety of ways that suit their location and lifestyle.

There is currently a series of consultations taking place, including this one, to ensure that we hear from as many people and find appropriate way forward to deliver the best and most accessible service for everyone who is in need.

What happens now to people who have low to moderate needs?

We have done some work to track people who were assessed as being below the needs level which would give access to statutory social care services. Although few people have responded to this (therefore we are doing some further work), those who have had their needs met through signposting and access to community-based services. We do already fund a number of services meeting lower levels of need in the community but we need to make sure that this funding is properly targeted. This is a 3 year plan to make sure that this happens.

There is a review of Information and Advice Services taking place in this financial year.

CF asked people to get back to her and if possible speak to people in their communities for their comments as well. We want your views on what people need, where they go to get it, what makes them feel safe and how they can stay healthy and independent. There is a questionnaire on web or responses can be sent directly to Charlotte or Phil Levick – hard copies of the questionnaire can be provided if you call 020 8547 6002 or 020 8547 6103 or you can just call us and have a chat.

Lower and moderate level needs are those which people have where they need a little assistance to live independently or where they have a carer and can remain at home with a little extra help to both. Sometimes these needs are short-term and sometimes more longer term and we need to be able to direct people to the support they need.

People with mental ill health or physical ill-health or a combination of the two would have different needs and we need to know how best to meet these. If a number of people say the same things these can be prioritised as areas to start on to be looked at to provide or commission. The deadline for feedback is 30 April 2008.

Promoting awareness was crucial and it was suggested that leaflets and small flyers be made available to places of worship and other voluntary and community groups. Promote more information through GP practices since nearly everyone sees their GP, this will be a good place to begin for promoting information. It will be helpful and people will get signposted straight away.

Concerns were raised about some individuals or communities who cannot or won't be able to say what are the problems or difficulties they are facing.

There are a number of different ways in which people can give their views and come forward for services and we work continuously to try and open up access. We have outreach work with different community groups and access via e-mail, post and telephone. We need to be made aware of the barriers that exist and the ways in which we can enable people to come forward and identify problems, so we can support them. Any ideas about how to achieve this would be very helpful.

It relation to clients or individuals asked to be involved in consultations it was stated that some of them find it difficult due to language, the process and lack of understanding of the issues fully.

We understand some of the difficulties and we will do all we can to facilitate this.

There is also a lack of proper feedback after the consultation is completed. It is important for people to know the outcomes.

This will be put on website and information will be made available as to what we are going to do after these consultations and what we can and cannot do and if not, why not. (If there are any other ways in which we can ensure that this process happens, please do let us know.)

The importance of adult education was raised and the cuts that the service has made in its provision could have an impact on enabling people participating in consultations. It was also suggested that young people should be invited to attend the Forum eg 6th Formers, youth service etc

It was suggested that we could use noticeboards in places of worship and newsletters from voluntary sector to publicise. The importance of communicating to certain people within the communities to get the information across to the wider community was also highlighted.

Concerns were raised about how individuals with low to moderate needs may be disadvantaged in employment especially those with mental health needs. There needs to be greater understanding by employers and given the proper support many individuals with mental health conditions could work and feel better.

CF informed the meeting that work is going on with GP's to support individuals to stay in work. South-West London and St George's Mental Health Trust, Workstart and Kingston Primary Care Trust we are working with RBK on this area too. We are looking at how to work more closely with the Chamber of Commerce and Kingston Town Centre Management also.

Sheila West informed the Forum that RBK is committed as an employer to supporting people with mental health conditions and disabled people to gain employment together with Jobcentre Plus.

Local Area Agreement & European Funding have been accessed to support this work.

Advice and information seems to be the main point that continues to come out strongly and loudly/clearly through out the consultation process. So we need to look carefully at access points.

It was suggested that there is a lot of experience and knowledge within the voluntary and community sectors locally and this needs to be used as a resource and assistance given to them to built capacity to support and delivery appropriate service for individuals.

CF further stated that we need to look at what resources there are within the local communities. The need to help local organisations to work within a safe structure and to develop facilities locally to meet needs.

It is important that funding is targeted most appropriately and in a way which will enable local people to get maximum benefit from it.

It was stated that the awareness of individual needs has to be raised and how the voluntary and community sectors can play a role in ensuring that services are delivered to the community as a whole and those who are in need.