

Beacon Event
10 November 2009
Marriott Hotel – Preston

Don Rowbottom – Programme Lead for Wellbeing and Prevention led a workshop on Help Direct and how this links in with positive engagement of older people. Don firstly explained the background on Help Direct. It is a new preventative service that gives information, signposting and referral services to all adults in Lancashire to help them stay independent, and improve their wellbeing. The key aims of Help Direct are:

- To provide information and advice that is useable and accessible. It has 4 providers covering the 12 districts in Lancashire, so customers can phone the nearest provider to them and speak to an advisor. The advisor has access to a wellbeing directory. This is a directory designed for customers, and advisors to use, to find services in Lancashire that could help the customer's needs. The advisor can then advise the customer on what they can do and where they can go to help with their problem.
- A follow up call is then made a few weeks later to make sure that they are happy with the service they have received, and if there is anything else they can help with.
- Improve wellbeing. This is by helping the customer to realise what needs to be done to improve their wellbeing, and stay independent, and to help them gain access to that.
- Deliver preventative support. By helping the customer with their problem in the early stages, this can prevent the problem from becoming more serious and needing help from social services.

Help Direct links in well with and supports the aims of Lancashire's strategy for an ageing population. Older people played a key role in the development of Help Direct for example through older people forums, and Lancashire 50 forward the LinkAge Plus pilot project. Help Direct promotes wellbeing through positive engagement for the older person by making use of the information and advice available and getting people to think about their own wellbeing, and helping people to re-connect with their local community.

Q: Age Concern did a resource book – do you have one of these?

A; We used this and many other sources of information from local services to pull together our wellbeing directory which is about to be launched to the public on the LCC website. It was suggested that we could use teletext as an information service for people who don't have access to the internet.

Q: Who does the follow up support?

A: The advisor who has dealt with the customer will ring them a few weeks later to check how things are going and if they need any more assistance. It's also encouragement for more referrals because people know that we do check that they are ok and that everything has been resolved. People may then feel comfortable about bringing other problems.

Q: Is there any training provided for the people who are answering the clients calls, or is it like a call centre?

A: The advisors do have training that is provided by LCC e.g. safeguarding adults training. Training is ongoing and the advisors do go on all the training that is relevant.

Q: How many people are working on Help Direct and what % of those people reflects the BME Community?

A: Cannot give an answer on actual numbers as currently working through the reports, but it is something we will look into regarding the BME community.

Q: How does each Help Direct team keep in touch with customers?

A: We are still improving our service as we go along as it is still in the development stages. As there is a broad spectrum of service users we need to test out ways in which we can get feedback and keep in touch with our customers. Small Sparks is something which we can use to fund small groups of people to meet for this sort of thing.

Q: Have you managed to pull in any extra funding?

A: Yes, we have received funding from the North Lancs PCT and PBC (Practice Based Commissioning) for the advisors from GP surgeries. We are now starting to look at sponsorship.

Q: With regards to connectivity – what about the post office?

A: We have spoken with a few post offices about having an advisor come in for an hour and left leaflets, however found that most post offices are very small, and there are less of them around.

Q: With regards to "hard to reach people" – why don't you use the prescription delivery services to help get information about Help Direct to people?

A: This is something we will look into.

Q: Do you have any language barriers and need for translation?

A: Haven't come across any as yet, but something we will look into preparing for.

Suggestion: At Leicester County Council we train all our drivers of meals on wheels to recognise other issues and signs of vulnerability – maybe something you could look into?