

PATIENT PARTICIPATION

Carers Group at Caen Medical Centre

on Thursday 3rd November 2016

Attendees

Dr Brian Bennett	Paul Brash
Julie Tanton	Ann Crome
Carolyn Hill, Devon Carers	Diane Eate
Jenny Hurd, District Nurse	Valerie Hunt
Jean Clarke	Avril Parker
Glynn Webb, Yr5 Medical Student at Caen	

The practice invited patients who are recorded on the practice computer system as being a carer to attend today's patient participation group meeting, 6 patients accepted the offer and 5 of those attended today's meeting.

Welcome/ Introduction

Dr Bennett started the meeting by thanking everyone for taking the time to attend and asked everyone to introduce themselves. Dr Bennett then explained that we hold patient participation group meetings on a quarterly basis inviting selected groups of patients with particular needs or conditions to discuss how we are doing at meeting their needs, the experiences they have encountered and how we might improve our services and move forward by asking them for feedback. He explained that after previous meetings minor changes or improvements had been implemented for the benefit of those patients using that service.

Dr Bennett introduced and thanked Carolyn Hill from Devon Carers for attending today's meeting. He explained that Carolyn attends the practice approximately twice a month to meet on a one to one basis with carers who have been referred or self-referred to the service. He also introduced District Nurse Jenny Hurd, who is the Lead District Nurse for the team based at the practice.

We started the discussions by looking at the outcome and suggested changes which were agreed when we met with a group of carers in June 2015, some of the patients present at today's meeting had also attended the meeting in 2015. As suggested the practice has set up a link on its website which directs patients to the Devon Carers website. The practice continues to publish 'carers' information within the practice and keeps its dedicated carers section in the waiting room up to date and relevant. The practice has not produced a list of contacts for carers as we felt that individual needs would require different signposting and the practice worried that a list could quickly become out of date and possibly give carers incorrect information as funding pathways and services are constantly changing, especially within social care.

The following areas were raised and discussed.

Appointment Availability

One carer asked did we still offer most of our appointment as on-line bookable. The practice team explained that over the past 12-18 months we have reduced the number of on-line bookable appointments, this has come about after Patient Participation group

discussions. The practice tries hard to offer the correct balance of appointment types and although we do not want to discriminate against those patients who do not wish to book on-line we also want to free our telephone lines for them to get through by enabling other patients to book their own appointments without having to call the surgery. Those patients present who currently use on-line booking said it works well for them.

Telephone Consultations

Some of the carers present said that attending an appointment for either themselves or for the person they are caring for can be a logistical nightmare. Those that had received a call back from the doctor said that this had been gratefully received and often the phone call had resolved the issue either with advice or a prescription being issued. Some said that often they feel isolated and that reassurance from the GP can be all that is needed to make them feel happy that they are providing the correct care.

Hospice Service

Those carers present that have had contact with the Hospice Service said that they were provided with a brilliant service and could not fault the care they received. They said the Hospice Nurse was always fully informed of the situation and a great source of knowledge and support. The practice team confirmed that links between the Hospital consultants and the Hospice team had greatly improved with consultants in contact with the hospice teams or copying them into clinic letters.

Respite/Day Care

One carer present stated that good local day-care in Braunton makes a sometimes difficult situation bearable. All the carers present said that they find it very difficult to leave the person they carer for and need to know that the person left to do the caring is capable, only then can they truly relax and enjoy their 'me' time. The level of respite care available to carers can be very different with some only using the goodwill of friends and family to enable them time off to others having regular, funded sitters. The carers present were informed that they should contact Care Direct if they wished to discuss the options available to them. They would be required to have a needs assessment and all services offered are means tested, but there is also some help they can pay for. Care Direct can also help with Occupational Therapy input which in turn can help with the supply and installation of appliances and aids.

Devon Carers

Carolyn Hill explained a little about Devon Carers and the service they offer. Some of the patients present had already met Carolyn for assessment and advice. She explained that she attends Caen to see carers but can also see them in their own home. Devon Carers can offer a number of services including Carers Alert Cards, monthly newsletters, support group information as well as advising and signposting to other agencies. Some patients can be offered a Carers Support Officer who can help them implement change to make the role of being a carer easier and safer. Devon Carers can also fund some help for carers which might be in the form of a gardener or a cleaner but this needs to be assessed on a case by case basis and taken to panel for funding, this funding is then assessed on a regular basis. Carolyn said that she can signpost carers to local voluntary services that are available to offer help that can make a big difference to the carer.

Carers Health Checks

One carer present said that she had attend for a carers health check but most said that they seek GP help on an as needed basis.

Do you feel supported in your role as a Carer?

Most present said that being a carer can be very lonely and frustrating at times. Some were aware of the Carers Support Group that meets in Braunton, a couple have attended this group in the past. They said it was great to meet up with people who are in the same situation that can offer support.

The group talked about Carer Alert Cards, which are carried by the carer, so should anything happen to the carer, this card alerts the services to the fact that they are the main carer for another person. The Carer Alert Cards are available via Devon Carers and all present thought they are a great idea as this helps to give the carer peace of mind.

On discussion it was apparent that many of the carers present do not see themselves as a 'carer' but just the person looking after a loved one. It was agreed that the definition of a carer can be viewed very differently by other people and even organisations. Many also have a lot of pride in what they do and find it hard to ask for help as they do not want to fail their loved one.

A number of carers present said at times they had been frustrated when professionals had not listened to them and their opinion. They stressed that they care for the patient full time and do know what is best for the patient, what works well and how best to achieve this. This might be with regards to treatment planning or lifting a patient who has fallen. They said that some professionals can often make suggestions that are not realistic and not always best for the patient.

It was agreed by the group that sometimes just knowing that help is available when you need it was a great relief.

Does the Practice Provide Sufficient information for Carers

The practice has kept its designated area in the waiting room to display carers groups and information, it also has a folder containing information about support groups which is kept in the waiting room.

It was suggested that we should promote the Devon Carers service that runs from the practice to all clinicians working in the practice so that they could sign post carers to this service, who can then in turn help carers with all aspects of care and help and point them in the right direction.

Outcome/Changes Suggested

- Practice clinicians to actively promote referrals to Devon Carers.

Summary/ Discussion

The patients present were thanked for taking the time to attend today to talk about their experiences. On the whole the patients present gave positive feedback about the service we currently offer. The patients present said that they had been happy to attend and had appreciated being able to talk about their role as a carer.