

## Wandsworth Carers' Day 15 June 2011

### Analysis of comments made to Wandsworth LINK about carers' experience of visiting /supporting older people while they were in care homes or at hospital

12 people gave us their comments. They were asked for both their positive and negative experiences. They made 32 comments between them: 12 positive and 20 negative. They have been grouped into themes as set out below.

#### Overall standard of care – 11 comments

On the positive side 4 comments were compliments about the overall experience for older people – they had been looked after well and the place was clean and well looked after:

*"The home tried very much to meet my friend's needs. She is being treated well."*

At the other end of the scale, there were 7 negative comments recording different levels of neglect: lack of staff supervision of people wandering, widespread complaints about not being helped to go to the toilet, abusive staff, lack of staff time to help a person sit up out of bed, very poor standards of care despite fees of £1000 per week, people's own clothes getting lost. A particularly serious example was this one:

*"My husband was in a care home and was mostly bed bound. He needed the adjustable bed to keep his upper body up and his chest clear. The electrics on the bed broke down and the staff had difficulty in finding extra pillows. The home failed to mend the bed and my husband got a chest infection that got so serious that he was admitted to hospital. He never returned to the home and eventually died in hospital."*

#### Medication management – 4 comments

Two comments related to the improved management of medication that came when older people moved into care homes. Conditions stabilised and weight was better managed.

On the negative side, two comments highlighted wrong medicines being issued due to illiteracy of staff and the lack of attention to medication leading to hospitalisation of the older person.

### The importance of management – 3 comments

Two comments highlighted the importance of good managers to inspire poorly paid staff to deliver better care – specific individuals were praised.

*"There were very good managers who set an example and motivated staff. The staff were very good"*

The other comment identified the opposite – when a manager's attitude had fed through to staff having low expectations and poor care was the result.

### Peace of mind – 3 comments

Two comments reflected the relief of carers that their older relatives were safe in a home and getting good care and having their needs met better compared to when they had been living at home.

*"I had peace of mind knowing my father was safe"*

But another commentator, having seen her mother live in a care home, had decided that she would rather die at home than ever go into a home.

### Response to particular needs – 4 comments

One comment was full of praise about a home responding to a friend with Alzheimer's.

*"My friend has been in a home since January. I am very happy with the staff and the care they give. They are very calm when responding to people with Alzheimer's"*

But three comments covered the poor response to special needs such as the open plan layout of lounges for very frail older people with no smaller groupings of chairs to facilitate group activities and interaction, staff not following care plans which set out people's

particular likes and dislikes. An example of the distress and harm caused by staff missing the personal aspects of care was this one:

*"My husband lost a lot of weight in the home because of lack of fluids. He did not like tea and preferred drinking chocolate. I took a jar in but the staff never used it so he went without anything"*

#### Meals and mealtimes – 3 comments

One comment was in praise of the efforts made to make the dinner table look attractive.

*"There was a nicely arranged dining room with glasses etc"*

But two other comments were critical of the lack of help at mealtimes and the unattractiveness of the food, made worse by the large portions.

*"What has happened to hands on care and helping people to reach their food? Nurses do not do the basic care they used to but sit behind their computers"*

#### Organisation and administration – 3 comments

All these comments were negative and covered long delays in being discharged with people suffering mental and physical distress, 4 days without fluids as operation times kept on getting delayed and failure to contact carers when an older man had discharged himself.

#### Complaints – 1 comment

*"I had experienced very poor care and when I left I wanted to make a complaint only to be told that they had run out of complaints forms!"*

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