# Carer Survey 2013

#### **Carer Assessments & Support**

of carers prefer someone from the local carers centre to carry out a carer assessment prefer someone from the health service to carry prefer someone from an organisation supporting the person receiving care

Carers feel strongly that an assessor should be caring and understanding of carers' needs. The knowledge, understanding and specialist skills of the assessor were considered more important than the agency that the assessor came from.

The majority of carers considered that information and advice, emotional support and counselling, condition-specific training and regular breaks from caring should all be provided by right and free of charge for carers.

"Someone from a carers centre like VOCAL."

"It's the quality of the assessor that counts. Someone wise, knowledgeable and compassionate from any organisation."

#### **Using Technology**

of carers have used the internet within the last three months of carers have never used the internet

Older carers were less likely to have used the internet.

More than a third of carers expressed interest in obtaining support to use the internet if this were offered. Carers favoured support at home (19%); via the local library (15%) and at a local carers centre (12%).

Carers who had never used the internet said this was due to cost of equipment and/or broadband; a lack of motivation in using the internet e.g. lack of time or energy to tackle computers; no perceived need or interest in using computers; a sense of being 'too old' to bother and the carer's own incapacity.

"Too busy caring to take time out to learn but would like to."

"Don't know how and a bit scared to try."

"I am not clued up with it and cannot afford internet at home"

#### **Self-Directed Support (SDS)**

of carers feel they know little or nothing

of carers think it is 'very' or 'fairly' important that they got support in understanding and choosing SDS options

Many carers expressed fears about how SDS might affect current levels of benefits, quality of care and the availability of services from carer organisations.

Carers did not feel well informed about SDS and wanted to know more about it and how it might affect them. Carers were concerned about the responsibility and time needed to manage Direct Payments. Some carers felt that the introduction of SDS might be used as a means of cost cutting for local authorities.

"As I know nothing about the proposals I am concerned about their effect on my role and opportunities as a carer."

"I fear the quality of care and finances will be greatly affected."

#### **Economic well-being**

of respondents stated that 'financial planning for the future' is very important to them

said maximising benefits is important

said combining paid employment with caring responsibilities is important to them

More carers indicated that they were more interested in aspects of financial planning now than in the future.

Carers wanted support on financial matters, entitlement to benefits, pensions, childcare and related financial matters.

Combining employment with caring was an area where many carers wanted support. Issues included giving up employment to care; support to get back into employment; concerns for the person receiving care if the carer returned to work. A number of carers wanted financial support for their caring role.

"The person I care for is not stable at present and it is very hard to plan for the future."

"I gave up a full time job to give my mother more of my time."

Comments received from carers across the survey illustrate a wide range of caring situations and a wide range of needs and responses to the difficulties and challenges of caring. In personal comments, many carers expressed overwhelming emotions of stress, pressure, anxiety and concerns as they seek to manage often

exhausting caring responsibilities. Often there was little time or energy to negotiate contact with external agencies and systems. The survey also suggests that carers have strong views regarding carers' assessments and concerns regarding their lack of knowledge of Self-Directed Support (SDS).

### **VOCAL Carer Survey 2013**

In July 2013, VOCAL conducted a survey of carers in Edinburgh and the Lothians. The survey had two main purposes. It provided an opportunity for carers to comment on recent and imminent changes in the way carers receive services and support (including carers' rights, Self-Directed Support, economic well-being and using technology). It also sought feedback on carers' experiences of VOCAL and the difference VOCAL support had made to their caring situations.

The survey was mailed to 5,498 carers, advertised on the VOCAL website and promoted through carer networks. A total of 714 responses were received – a response rate of 13.2% which is similar to the response rate achieved for the previous survey in 2011 (14%).

The full Carer Survey Report 2013 is available to download from the VOCAL website: www.vocal.org.uk













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#### **Carers Experience of VOCAL**

of carers rate VOCAL's overall response as 'excellent' or 'good'

of carers rate as 'excellent 'or 'good' the friendliness of VOCAL's response, knowledge of staff and volunteers, ease of getting in touch with VOCAL and getting as much information as needed

Carers reported that the people they came into contact with at VOCAL were approachable, supportive, encouraging, informative and listened to them. Carers also felt reassured that VOCAL was there when needed.

Carers commented that the information provided by VOCAL helped keep them up to date and was provided in terms they could understand although a small number felt they were overwhelmed with information. Practical help, for example with applying for benefits was mentioned by some as was being able to talk to someone in times of stress.

The benefits of attending training courses and seminars were commented on and meeting other carers on training courses and in carer support groups was also of great benefit.

of carers report that the help they receive from VOCAL makes a difference to their lives

Carers commented that VOCAL had helped them by helping carers to recognise their own needs as carers and normalising their feelings about caring; reducing feelings of isolation; being listened to in a non-judgemental and supportive way; giving carers confidence and empowerment; peer support; practical help e.g. help with Power of Attorney, completing benefit forms; support in dealing with other agencies including advocacy; information; help with understanding the condition of the person receiving care.

"I found all VOCAL's staff and volunteers gave really useful, understandable and reassuring advice and help."

"Extremely helpful, friendly staff, nothing is a bother."

"VOCAL was the first place where I found the right information. They put me on the right track."

## "Just notice we are there"



