

Voices and Choices

Project Outline

This project has been made possible with the support of a three year grant from the Lloyds Bank Foundation.

Project Aims

To ensure that older people wishing to remain/maintain living independently in their own homes with appropriate support are able to do so.

To ensure that older people and their families/carers/friends who are considering options around a move into care provider accommodation have access to relevant information and are supported to make informed decisions about their care options.

To provide longer-term support delivered by a team of trained volunteers to address loneliness and isolation and ensure that vulnerable older people are safeguarded from harm and abuse.

Outlining the Need

Data from our advocacy service in care settings throughout Sandwell indicates that there are a number of older people who are dissatisfied with either the care setting they currently reside in, their dissatisfaction with the quality of care they receive, or both. Many older people moving into a care setting are expected to make a lasting decision about choosing a care home under very difficult circumstances and sometimes in great haste. Even with the support of family or friends, if available, this will be a difficult time. Research has shown that once established in a care home few people move again, so it is important they get this decision right.

Data from our cancer advocacy project indicates that many of those we have supported wish to remain in their own homes and to live as independently as possible. Feedback from users of this project highlights that they have greatly benefitted from advocacy support which has been able to articulate their needs and wishes. Provided it is safe to do so, adjustments are made to ensure people are supported, and there is continued support of an advocate our evidence shows that this is a realistic and achievable goal.

Meeting the Need

This service will focus on and prioritise the needs of older people with long-term health conditions which impact on increased levels of vulnerability for this user group including: lack of mobility, poor mental health, limited or no access to family and/or friends, lack of social support networks and loneliness/isolation.

The Project Officer will ensure that all those we support have a voice and are empowered to make informed decisions around their accommodation and care needs.

A team of trained volunteers will provide on-going psycho-social support, ensure that users are safeguarded and free from harm and abuse and address loneliness and isolation.

Model of Delivery

This Project will support older people, their families and carers who fit one or both of the following criteria:

1. Older people wishing to remain/maintain their independence in their own home with appropriate support where it is safe for them to do so.
2. Older people, their families and/or carers who are considering choices and options around extra-care, residential or nursing care accommodation options.

We will provide a Project Officer and trained volunteer advocates who will assess individual need in relation to the criteria above to ensure that people have a voice, are aware of their rights and choices and are empowered to make informed decisions around the planning and delivery of health and social care services.

Specifically we will adopt the following outcome focussed approaches:

- Ensure that early intervention and appropriate care is put in place where a person wishes and is able to remain independently in their own home, thus avoiding the potential for their needs to escalate to a crisis point and the need for more costly intervention and/or hospital admission.
- Ensure that family members/friends who take on unpaid caring responsibilities are aware of their rights and entitlements with regard to carers benefits and allowances.
- Use our existing knowledge and track record of providing advocacy support within a range of care settings in Sandwell to ensure that people have access

to information and are able to make meaningful informed decisions around their care options.

- Provision of on-going support by a team of trained volunteer advocates who will provide a 'Watching Brief' and on-going psychosocial support to ensure that:
 - a) People's health and care needs do not escalate to a crisis point.
 - b) Older people are safeguarded and free from risk of abuse.
 - c) We will address loneliness and isolation and ensure that older people are more connected to their community and social support networks.
- Provision of advocacy support where admission to hospital becomes unavoidable to ensure there is an appropriate discharge plan in place and that people are supported towards discharge at the earliest point, where it is safe, and where adequate measures are implemented to enable people to avoid potential hospital re-admissions.
- Provision of a designated volunteer advocate for people in nursing, residential and extra care settings who we identify as requiring on-going support and befriending following our existing interventions in care providers, particularly those who do not have any family or friends and disclose to us that they are lonely, isolated and/or depressed.

Project Outcomes

- ***Older people will feel more empowered to speak up for themselves and feel more in control:*** Users of this service will receive support from a designated Project Officer and trained volunteer advocates who will provide a one to one person-centred approach that develops an advocacy pathway with a clear focus on achievable goals. Users of this service will report that they feel better positioned to articulate their wishes, have the confidence to speak up and feel that they have been placed more at the heart of the decision making process in their lives.
- ***Feeling more involved:*** users and their carers will report that they feel more involved in decisions and choices around care and support options.
- ***Older people will feel less isolated and alone:*** users and their carers will report the support we have provided has made them feel less isolated and lonely. People will be supported to access social support networks and community based activities.
- ***Older people will be able to make informed decisions regarding access to care services:*** we will ensure that users and their carers have been enabled/empowered to effectively engage with those who plan or provide care

services to ensure their views are taken into account and that these services more adequately meet their needs.

- ***Improved quality of life and emotional wellbeing:*** users and their families will report that our support has had a direct positive influence on their quality of life and has led to them feeling safer.
- ***Increased independence:*** we will ensure that those we support are able to remain as independent as possible in their own homes and/or enable them to make informed choices when identifying day care, domiciliary care, extra care, nursing or residential care options.
- ***Maintaining dignity and respect:*** we will provide support and implement measures to ensure that people have a voice, feel more included and have been able to make real choices about their care and support.