



What Outcomes Do Carers Want from Commissioning?

This paper outlines the visions and outcomes from commissioning that Carers in Partnership considers to be of benefit to carers and the people they care for. It is intended to give guidance to those carers within localities who may have an opportunity to influence local commissioning decisions and it will also be helpful to commissioners in understanding the outcomes that carers seek from effective commissioning arrangements. The final section looks at how commissioners and carers could work together to achieve better outcomes for all.

1. The vision we seek

Carers in Partnership believes that good commissioning can achieve a community which:

- promotes mental health and includes people who experience mental distress and their families, friends and supporters
- offers individuals and where appropriate carers individual choice over quality services that will help them move towards recovery and retain control over their lives
- helps those affected by mental distress maximise their potential and participate in society meaningfully and safely.

2. The ethos we seek

Carers in Partnership seeks to ensure that commissioners and those influencing commissioning decisions support five principles as integral to local commissioning ethos:

1. Minimising the impact and helping people cope early on
2. Taking the whole picture into account
3. Supporting family, friends and networks
4. Quality in a crisis
5. Involvement in planning, delivery and review

Each of these five fundamental principles is the basis of our pyramid overleaf. The pyramid shows what kinds of **outcomes** carers will look for to know that ethos of mental health care is being met.

3. The outcomes we seek

5. Involvement in planning, delivery and review
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✘ Involvement in service planning, commissioning, delivery, audit✘ Involvement in staff recruitment and training✘ Users and Carers used as part of commissioning expertise
4. Quality in a crisis
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✘ Effective treatment in the right setting for the individual and those around✘ Sufficient well trained staff and volunteers in community and hospital✘ Places of security, safety and respite for individuals and families✘ Ready access to help when individuals or carers need it✘ Appropriate local beds when required; hospital not prison, residential
3. Supporting family, friends and networks
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✘ Two-way communication between those in a caring role and services✘ Friends, relatives and families supported to be effective and encouraging carers✘ Ongoing support for family and friends✘ Education and information for patients and families
2. Taking the whole picture into account
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✘ Choice in treatments and services✘ Background, individual needs and aspirations understood and worked with✘ Create individual outcomes which avoid excluding people✘ Holistic approach including housing, money, leisure, education, meaningful occupation and social contact✘ Whole picture of physical health needs and mental health needs understood catered for
1. Minimising the impact and helping people cope early on
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✘ Early help for all, including families and carers✘ Prevention rather than repair or referral✘ Widespread and stigma-free knowledge of mental health

4. Our plans to support Commissioners

Carers in Partnership believes that effective commissioning can help to change culture of mental health services, as well as improving quality and range of service provision. Many of the outcomes we hope to see from health and social care services would reflect a change of ethos which could be achieved in large part through commissioning.

Carers seek services that deliver these outcomes as efficiently as possible. Local active carers groups are in a good position to work closely with commissioners to encourage a positive ethos and to facilitate service improvement. We believe that carers can and should be involved in the commissioning process to the benefit of all concerned. Carers can support all dimensions of commissioning, particularly where they represent a local active carers group.

In terms of specific actions the following guidelines are suggested:

TO COMMISSIONERS

- Ensure that you are in contact with your local Active Carers Group (if in doubt contact Carers in Partnership—see below);
- Identify the key local commissioners for the members of that group;
- Outline the decision-making process and ensure that members of the group have the opportunity to contribute to commissioning decisions;
- Ensure that the process is transparent and that carers are fully aware of the difficulties, constraints etc;
- Enlist the support of carers in commissioning related activities such as analysing gaps in market and provision, supporting the tender process, reviewing existing services, monitoring and auditing feedback and developing commissioning strategies;
- Provide appropriate training opportunities to carers to develop their commissioning knowledge;
- Adopt the vision and ethos outlined in this paper;
- Communicate with carers and other stakeholders in clear language, free of jargon;
- Seek quick and early successes that set a positive example and demonstrate to everyone concerned what can be achieved when commissioners and carers work together.

TO ACTIVE CARERS

- Invite key local commissioners to meetings to explain local commissioning arrangements and help carers to identify the key players in local health and social care provision;
- Ensure that all members of your group understand the concepts of commissioning and the local commissioning arrangements;
- Discuss how best to support to those carers who attend commissioning meetings;
- Ensure that effective two way communications are established so that the carers attending such meetings can reflect views of a group rather than their own personal view;
- Review this paper, adapt it to suit local needs and then try to ensure that your commissioners read and adopt it as a basis for advising on local decision-making;
- Identify priority areas of service provision to seek to improve through influencing commissioning decisions;
- Enlist the support of a member of Carers in Partnership who will talk to your members about commissioning and will help to develop local strategies for carer involvement in the commissioning process.

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