

Summary of our findings (submitted to SCC in May 2017):

- i. Countywide about half of the VCSEs asked did know about the Carers Hub; the one exception was Tamworth where none of the participants (from 8 different local groups) were aware of the Hub.
- ii. Where there was awareness the conversations frequently turned towards mentioning of Carers Association South Staffordshire (CASS) and North Staffordshire Carers and upon further discussion these were significantly more likely to be the source of awareness about specific carer's issues.
- iii. Local provision of support was viewed as absent or poor in several localities; only two local groups supported by the Hub were mentioned (in Newcastle and Lichfield).
- iv. Some groups who had proactively engaged had received no reply from the Hub and subsequently became disengaged.
- v. Awareness of personal wellbeing budgets was very low, and significantly worse than awareness of the service in general. There was also some confusion about the role of assessment and one suggestion that assessments and budgets were being deliberately held back for fear of them going to the wrong people.
- vi. Signposting and Information services were frequently criticised for being too web-based, not local enough and poorly promoted, including more than one criticism of inaccessible print materials.
- vii. Most struggled to understand why the Carers Hub has failed to engage with the range of existing services and on more than one occasion the idea of a 'credibility gap' was raised or simply stating that 'it's not working'. Most suggested improvements to links with VCSE organisations through improved communications and use of the forums provided by Support Staffordshire.
- viii. Suggested future development of the service specific to carers were around engaging with carers who are isolated and not yet accessing any services; better engagement with the NHS; and the service needing to offer support beyond signposting ie. Hand holding to attend services in the early days.
- ix. There was general disappointment and frustration that carers are currently being let down because of a poor service. There was acknowledgement that many of the Carers Hub staff are doing their best and trying to provide a good service.
- x. The sector was roughly split between wanting to help 'fix' the service (it was generally considered to need major changes, not just tweaks) and

those who felt it had demonstrably failed and could not see why it was still being commissioned.

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