

Mears Care Limited

Project Pilot Summary Report

February
2016





Introduction

This report provides a summary of the data that Healthwatch Torbay has collated during the 2 month period between 1st October 2015 and 31st December 2015, in respect of services at Mears Care Limited, who manage the provision of home care for people living in Torbay and Living Well@Home home care services. Healthwatch Torbay are the independent consumer champion for health and social care services in Torbay.

Mears approached Healthwatch Torbay to undertake a small pilot project to review how services were being delivered to a small client group in the St Marychurch area with the intention to repeat the exercise in 6 months' time.

Methodology

Healthwatch Torbay were asked by Mears to interview 10 clients - who were selected by Mears - in the client's home without any member of Mears staff present. The clients identified by Mears were those who had already raised concerns with the provider and wanted to work collaboratively to improve the quality of care provided by Mears. Consent was only obtained from 6 clients in total.

Four Healthwatch Torbay Enter and View volunteers - who have completed the required training and have the required DBS checks - arranged and completed the interviews.

Objectives

To provide the opportunity for individuals who are seldom heard the chance to have their say about the health and social care services they currently receive; and to raise awareness of the role of Healthwatch Torbay as an independent consumer champion for health and social care services in the community.



Summary of Results

- **Question 1 - What services do you currently receive from Mears?**

A range of personal care services were delivered to clients interviewed from Mears, some delivered daily others weekly. During the interview some clients mentioned they also received services from other voluntary groups.

Personal Care delivered included - full range of personal care, assistance with bathing, meal preparation, shopping, domestic duties, getting up in the morning and getting ready for bed in the evening.

- **Questions 1a - Does the care you receive meet your needs?**


On the whole clients felt that the care provided was adequate with main concern areas being around reliability e.g. when a carer doesn't turn up or stay for the required time or if a client is not advised of the relief carer's name or revised time of visit. This can have a massive knock on effect to client's daily life including the taking of medication.

One client was particularly unhappy with the care currently received and was concerned that the carers had not received adequate training or possibly an inappropriate carer was assigned to support this client.

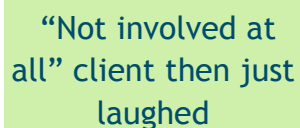
- **Question 1b - How involved do you feel in your care?**

Generally clients did not feel involved with the care that they receive. Main issues raised covered lack of time available and the pressure to complete each visit.

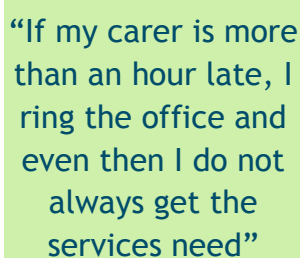
Specific Quotes from clients included:




"I need to get on to them all the time, and if not they will start messing me around"



"Not involved at all" client then just laughed



"If my carer is more than an hour late, I ring the office and even then I do not always get the services need"



"No time to stop and have a think about the care being delivered."



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- **Question 1c - Do you have a choice with the time of the visits/what care is provided or which care assistant visits?**

The feedback gathered indicated that there were many issues surrounding timings, especially when it is time critical for medication and for family carers who have other daily demands on their time.

Clients are provided with a rota but this is not always adhered to. Some carers come late, some early with up to a 2 hour difference on any given day. It is not always the carer on the rota that visits and the client receives no notice of the replacement carer information in advance.

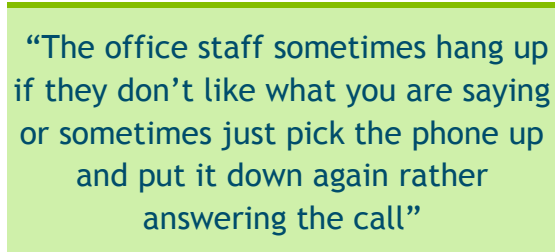
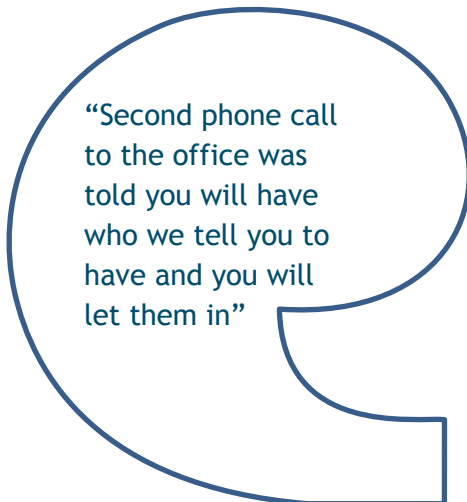
Without exception, clients would prefer a level of consistency with carers so they can build a relationship with the carers providing the service.

- **Question 1d - Is there anything you are not happy with?**

The main issues centred on the office staff and call handlers who clients felt were rude, ignorant, were not honest and did not understand the impact of the changes to care being delivered at short notice to the client and family member's daily life.

Other concerns raised were around carers not turning up at all on occasions and carers not having time to complete the visit in a relaxed manner instead providing a rushed service making the client sometimes feel like a burden in their own home.

Specific Quotes from clients included:



- **Question 2 - From April 2015 your care has been delivered/ overseen by Mears. Have you noticed any difference? If so what has changed?**

During the transition process clients were advised that nothing would change however in reality everything changed, different carers, not reliable, increased number of carers to complete care duties, inadequate trained carers and no one person taking ownership of client's package of care.

Even when the same organisation continued under Mears, rather than continue with the same services that was already working, the client's carers changed.



Clients have noted that staff moral is low and there is bad feeling with the carers who previously worked for different providers and are receiving difference levels of pay.

One client felt that the care coordinators should have a good level of care experience and the ex-carers who now work in the office seem to have more understanding and empathy approach with clients when they phone in.

On a positive note, clients noted the improvement with the Out of Hours now being open until 11pm.

- **Question 3 - How can the service/care provided be improved?**

Client's felt the service could be improved by:

- Same carers arriving on time and having sufficient time to undertake the care duties required.
- Improved contact from the office when changes to carers happen due to ill health /holidays etc.
- Friendly and courteous attitude from office staff managing the call centre
- "Happy staff would give a better service" - Mears need to improve relationships between staff from different agencies.

- **Q4 - What would your ideal service/care be?**

Client's ideal service would include all of the above plus they would also like:

- to have a familiar face to build relationship with the carer.
- to spend time with other people their own age outside their own home rather that all the care and support being delivered inside their home. This would improve client's wellbeing and stop clients feeling lonely or isolated.
- Carers' lives to be improved by not constantly having to answer their mobile phone or texts received from the office when they should be delivering care to the client.
- Carers to have time scheduled to chat with the client to ensure the care being delivered is appropriate and to also highlight any other concern the client may have.

Further Analysis

In addition to the six client interviews, the cared for were encouraged to leave online reviews of Mears Care Limited online via the Healthwatch Torbay website, which allows the public to rate & review local health and/or social care services directly online. In total, 23 reviews were received of Mears Care Limited in this period.

During that period, 45% of the reviews were positive and 42% negative, with the remaining 13% considered 'neutral'. Overall, reviewers rated Mears Care Limited as 3.2 out of 5 stars.





Review Comments

A selection of the more constructive comments are below. These have been used in conjunction with the six client interviews to produce in-depth, evidence-based recommendations.

My carers are lovely when I get my regulars

I find the office staff to be quite rude at times, seem to never pass on messages, and change my carers around without informing me, and I never speak to the same person.

Terrible experience

Strangers turning up in your home at unexpected times. Drugs given seemed to be wrong, have experienced untrained and rude staff, plus bad meal times and double-booked care assistants arriving to do the same things - then no real care is actually given.

Office communication could be better

Constant changing staff without notification. Made it difficult for my mother who likes routine and same faces.

Unsatisfactory Rotas

Constant fiddling with the rotas - normal regular carers taken off, constant disruption. It's so very, very distressing and upsetting.

No communication. Problems ignored.

Silly excuses for poor timing when I call office. Care workers very good but not given time to give the care they need or want to. Critical times ignored. Calls unallocated every week.

Carers very caring

Carers always polite and caring. Sometimes late though, through no fault of their own.

Care workers very good. Organisation isn't.

Rota times & people named not kept to. My time is 12pm but it can be changed by office almost anytime they please without notice.

The carers really do care

Whoever compiles the visits lists does not appear to have a map, sending carers zig-zagging all over the town.

Care workers very friendly and considerate

I am very pleased. I don't like eye drops but care workers make me feel relaxed.



Recommendations

Healthwatch Torbay recommendations have been split into five categories: training, communication, professionalism of the carers, timings and links with the community. Healthwatch Torbay recognises that the following recommendations are based on a relatively small sample size (29 people) and further investigation may be required.

Training

- Office staff - Mears to review their office team as it seems as some staff have insufficient basic customer service skills. We recommend Mears review their induction training of office staff to include active listening, shadowing of carers and ensure the training delivered is relevant to the individual's role. Training to be revisited on a regular basis.
- Carers - We recommend that Mears review the allocation of carers to each client to ensure the most appropriate member of staff is identified to meet individual client needs. Mears to ensure that relevant training and support is provided to carers especially around mental health issues.

Communication

- We recommend that Mears ensure all communication is person centred rather than organisational centred.
- Improve communication between the office staff and clients regarding changes to their published rota in a timely manner to include a named carer (to be agreed with the client), revised visit time and ensure the office staff fully brief the carer with the client's requirements and will have sufficient time to deliver the care.
- We recommend that Mears look at the way they deliver the service and possibly look at small neighbourhood team, so that clients are aware of who their carer and reserve carer might be which would improve consistence.
- Mears to consider identifying an individual or small team within the office staff who could take responsibility for a client's care package and be a client point of contact.

Professionalism of the carers

- Mears to put in place procedures to improve staff moral.
- Mears to ensure that clients do not become a sounding board for disgruntled carer's issues with their employer as this could have a detrimental effect for the vulnerable clients in receipt of care and could make them feel guilty for receiving care and open to manipulation.
- Mears to find alternative ways to avoid distracting carers with constant text/call when carers are at a planned client visit.

Timing

- We recommend that Mears review the rota to give more realistic timings for each visit with clients and ensure the time is appropriate to deliver the care required. This will hopefully reduce the number of visits that exceed being over 15 minutes late.



Links with the community

- We recommend that Mears support clients by helping them to access information and services delivered within the community. This will help to support client's general wellbeing.
- We recommend that an independent agency regularly completes quality assurance checks by speaking directly with clients to ensure the care provided meets the clients' needs and that clients feel involved in monitoring the standards of care delivered. In addition it will also provide clients with an independent alternative line of communication to raise their concerns.

Thanks

Healthwatch Torbay would like to thank all the clients who gave up their time to provide valuable feedback about their experience during the interviews conducted by our volunteers. The report with the finding and recommendations will be forwarded to Mears and we will work with them to move forward with the recommendations highlighted. A copy will be available through Healthwatch Torbay.

Response from Mears

David Harborne from Mears Care Torbay would like thank the people who gave up their time to share their experiences. It is very important we listen to the people we support, so that we can develop services that meet their needs. The information gathered has shaped our development plan and will support our Outcome Based Working pilot which will commence in April 2016.



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