

Nottinghamshire Customer Services Centre – Carer Telephone Assessments

1. Introduction

The first contact many people will have with their Council will be with its Customer Services Centre (CSC). Many Councils are now looking at ways to restructure the Customer Services Centre so that it covers more functions, offers more extensive and accurate advice to callers and resolves more enquiries at the front door.

With increasing work load pressure on adult social care teams what role could the CSC play in reducing workflow into operational teams by undertaking some assessments?

The model below describes how a Carers Assessment Service based within the “front end” is reducing process by undertaking carer telephone assessments; providing a range of information and advice; improving access to preventative services and directly commissioning carers personal budgets.

2. Background information

Nottinghamshire County Council has restructured its Customer Services Centre as part of a wider strategy to promote independence and well being while achieving economies of scale and improved customer outcomes.

The Carer Support Service was set up in 2013 initially on a pilot basis with the aim of reducing the backlog of carers’ assessments in operational teams and of ensuring that older carers access the resources they need to support them in their caring role. The service now comprises three fte Carer Support Workers located within an Adult Access Team at the Customer Services Centre.

The Carer Support Service has been evaluated by Public Health in 2014 and is already demonstrating a significant impact on reducing processes and improving customer experience.

“The process is a leaner and more efficient way of meeting carers’ needs. The service has developed positive relationships with, and relieved pressure on, the district teams.” Commissioning Manager, Carers

3. Findings

The minimum process introduced by the Carer Support Service enables older carers to:

- be assessed over the telephone at a time that suits them and have reduced waiting times, with cases being assessed within an average of a 7 day period
- receive accurate information and immediate support to enable them to continue caring longer and avoid crises
- have emergency respite arranged quickly and appropriately
- be referred for a carers’ break provided by the NHS when appropriate
- be referred and signposted to relevant organisations, supporting prevention
- be promptly assessed regarding a carers’ personal budget
- are reviewed over the phone where appropriate

The three fte carer support workers are completing an average of 110 carer assessments per month.

Carers report that the telephone assessment is a far less intrusive and time-consuming process than a home visit and does not negatively affect the person they are caring for.

"I just wanted to say a big Thank You to everyone I spoke to for making it so easy and dealing with my request efficiently from the initial person at Customer Services who took details to (Carer Support Worker) who was so friendly and helpful...I expected to encounter a lot more red tape.." Carer

The Care Act gives councils a new responsibility regarding the assessment of carers needs which replaces the existing requirement for carers to be providing "a substantial amount of care on a regular basis". It will mean more carers will be able to have an assessment, comparable to the right of the people they care for. The Carer Support service is one initiative which will assist Nottinghamshire in meeting this demand.

Other minimum processes planned In Nottinghamshire include an:

- "Online" Carers' Assessment from April 2015
- "Online" Carers' Assessment will ask permission to share carer details with GP. Carer Support Service will then securely pass details on to Carer Champion within GP surgery so surgery can respond appropriately and stream line access into other preventative services
- Dialogue with the Voluntary and Community sector to jointly address information and advice provision and assisted online Carers' Assessments
- Grant Aid developments: provision of universal information and advice (and specifically for carers) has been identified as a key theme for the next round of Grant Aid applications for 2015-2018
- New contract for a Carers Advice and Information Hub will be awarded in 2015, which will include specifications around provision of information and advice for carers and assisting carers to undertake Carers' Assessments online
- There are also plans to further extend telephone carers assessments to under 65's.

4. Describe the minimum process

Carer Support Service is completing an average of 110 assessments per month over the telephone (based on 3 fte Community Care Officers)

The Carer Assessment worker:

- will undertake a telephone assessment at a time to suit the carer. Will make an initial introductory call to explain the process and give an indication of length of time
- has access to "on line" tools and resources in the form of a Carer Assessment, and an on line Directory of Support
- provides relevant information and advice

- will complete a support plan identifying personal outcomes with the carer, if appropriate
- can directly commission a Carer's Personal Budget enabling it to be set up promptly
- completes the end to end process frequently in one telephone call

The process is more streamlined

Carers report an improved customer experience

It has very significantly reduced the number of carer assessments being completed in older adults' teams freeing qualified social worker time to complete other more complex work.

It supports the Council's channel shift away from face to face contact towards telephone and on line interactions where appropriate, and makes best use of staff time as well as delivering a better service to more carers.

For further information contact:

Name: Penny Spice, Commissioning Manager, Carers

Email: Penny.Spice@nottsc.gov.uk