



Carer Services Consultation and Plan 2015-18

In the survey for our 2013-14 Impact Report, there was one request for “a family group where people can discuss their problems with people in similar situations” and a further suggestion of “a shopping service to get to the supermarket”.

Our focus on benefits to carers has increased during the current Children & Young People’s Project, and so a consultation about direct activities and support for carers was carried out at the same time as our recent consultation on full-day and overnight trips. This seemed appropriate because the opportunity for carers to accompany trips is a good example of a potential service and carers of children and young people are those most likely to need additional support.

The responses from the formal consultation are attached:

- There was only one request for a carer support group coupled with a sitting service to enable attendance at the support group, and no demand for other services such as shopping service, advocacy and welfare rights advice or assistance with getting involved with their communities.
- One carer was anxious about her son making the transition to senior school, which could be addressed by signposting to the Social Work Transitions Officer and the school.
- This low level of demand may be a reflection of adequate existing provision in these areas: the Borders Carers Centre has offered support groups for at least the last 20 years, an independent Direct Payments Agency has been in place almost as long and Borders Independent Advocacy Service has had a learning disabilities service since 2004. However there is still some need, which could be at least partly addressed by us ensuring that we discuss support needs with all the carers we work with, and signpost them to other services. Initial contact and Annual Reviews provide opportunities to do this.
- Also, from informal consultation there is no doubt carers like being involved with Interest Link as an organisation, felt comfortable discussing issues with Branch Co-ordinators and benefited from their involvement as volunteers, in social events, committees and their annual review meetings with their Branch Co-ordinator. Through participation in a community organisation such as Interest Link they can improve their connection with their community.

- Carers' readiness to accompany overnight trips to provide care is also evidence of how comfortable they feel with our service (see separate Proposal for Group Trips) and one carer also requested to join a group trip purely as a break for themselves.

Plan

- There does not seem to be sufficient demand to justify Interest Link setting up, for example its own carer support group: an extrapolation of survey results across Interest Link would suggest there might be 6 requests to join, spread across four branches and a very large geographical area. This possibly reflects that there is reasonably good local provision of carer support groups, family advice and representation (see Appendix 2).
- There seems to be a similarly very limited demand for a sitting or shopping service (both of which would also conflict with our commitment to delivery entirely through volunteers and friendship based on common interest).
- However, we know from experience in past projects that carers sometimes benefit from signposting to support services, and the Scottish Borders Carers Strategy highlights that not all carers access services they might benefit from:

“Scottish Borders has a higher than average number of carers living in remote and rural areas. These carers often experience particular barriers when trying to access the full range of health, education, youth and social care services available to them and/or the person they care for.”

We therefore plan to ensure that we discuss support needs with all the carers we work with, and signpost/refer them to other services if needed. Initial contact and Annual Reviews provide excellent opportunities to do this.

- We also know that carers like being involved with Interest Link as an organisation, feel comfortable discussing issues with Branch Co-ordinators and benefit from involvement as volunteers, in social events and on Branch committees. We will also ensure we maximise this involvement.
- The consultation on full-day and overnight trips (see Group Trips Plan) also shows that some carers would like to be involved with the trips as a break for themselves and/or to provide personal care, and we will ensure they are involved in trip planning.
- We will also keep the question of specific activities and support open and revisit it each time we carry out large-scale evaluations and consultations.

May 2015.

Appendix 1: Responses from survey on services for carers

Intro:

- Looking at your needs as a carer, we hope that the respite provided by befriending improves your life.
- We also hope that you feel we keep in touch with you enough through annual reviews, newsletters, consultations/surveys, social events and the chance to be on our committees.
- In addition, we can signpost you to range of support services, such as the Carers Centre's support groups, Borders Independent Advocacy Service, the Local Area Co-ordinators, the Transition Officer and Encompass (formerly Direct Payments Agency).

Question: Do you feel the need for additional activities or support Interest Link could provide direct to you? For an example, a parents support group, welfare rights advice or help in connecting with your community.

Yes: 1 request for parents discussion group & sitting service.

1 issue on transition (addressed by signposting to Transitions Officer & school)

No: 14

Comments

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| No, I don't feel there is a need for that. Quite happy as things are really. |
| I don't think its your duty. The best help for me would be a full day or overnight respite for Rachel. |
| Personally no. We cope pretty well. |
| No comments received |
| I would like more info on support that would be available for James and his transition to high school....there could be a problem with him walking to and from school. I am not sure if you are able to help but may know who can. This may well be covered by the high school. |
| No |
| Informal support for carers is important: I get this through being on the Interest Link committee and knowing Stef and Val. Asking carers if they feel supported could be included in annual review. |
| A support group combined with a sitting service would be good. |
| I am very satisfied with support and respite for Charlie with Interest Link so far and desire no further services. |
| I am very satisfied with Respite Care and group attendance with Interest Link Borders at present. No desire for care support or groups. |
| No |
| No |
| No |
| No, I'm really happy with how it works for him. |
| No |
| No thank you. |

Appendix 2: Existing services for families that include children and young people with learning disabilities

- Statutory Services
 - ❖ The learning support services at primary and high schools (part of Integrated Children's Services) and Borders College: apart from at some primary schools, these provide lessons in separate additional support units which do not mix with mainstream classes.
 - ❖ Social Workers and Local Area Co-ordinators from Integrated Children's Services and the Learning Disabilities Service, and staff from the NHS Borders Children's Learning Disabilities Service. These provide targeted professional services, assessment, support and advice to families.
 - ❖ Respite:
 - Up to age 18, statutory learning disabilities residential respite is provided by Aberlour Options in a house in St Boswells during school holidays and at weekends. Access is restricted by Social Work to around 30 children with severe learning disabilities, or serious medical conditions, very challenging behaviour or family crisis. Even for these there is a waiting list for available places. Aberlour also provide some community support, accessed through Social Work and taking around 20 families children out monthly. Within our age range, probably around 30 families are able to access the Aberlour respite.
 - Respite for those aged 18-25 is entirely residential, principally provided in a house run by Ark Housing in Kelso. Of the families we work with, probably around 15 are able to access it. Access is tightly restricted in the same way as the children and young people's service.
 - ❖ Adult Day Services (which young people tend to move into aged 20-25 if they are eligible): either day centres or paid community support. Access to both has been greatly reduced by stricter eligibility criteria that excludes around 60% of people with learning disabilities. As with residential respite, of the families we work with, probably around 15 are able to access it.
- Non-statutory support:
 - ❖ Borders Carers Centre runs 5 local carer support groups, provides training and workshops for carers and carries out formal carer assessments and advocacy. We will cross-refer.
 - ❖ Encompass is the Borders Direct Payments Agency and help carers with all aspects of recruiting and employing staff and liaising with social care and health services over care packages including self-directed support (which is still at an early stage regarding children and young people). We will cross-refer.
 - ❖ Borders Independent Advocacy Service provide representation and has a specific learning disabilities service. We will cross-refer.
 - ❖ Borders Additional Needs Group (BANG) is a parent-led carer support group. It currently provides a monthly drop-in session for parents and children aged up to around 10 at a centrally-located community centre. Membership of 35 families covers all types of additional needs including social, emotional and rare diseases, with around 10 having learning disabilities. The children involved are starting to come into our project's age range and there will be scope for us to cross-refer and for our carers to attend BANG's parent support group.
 - ❖ Borders Aspergers & Autism Group Support (BAAGS), a parent-led group focused mainly on training and raising awareness among employers and the public. Interest Link staff and volunteers are likely to access their training.