

Extra Care Review: Connections update

December 2016



Introduction

In 2015, Healthwatch Lambeth reviewed the borough's extra care schemes¹ to find out how well they were working for residents. Although we found the level of care and amenities at schemes were generally good, many residents told us they felt lonely and cut off from their local community. In response to our findings, in spring 2016 Lambeth Council provided a grant of £4,000 to each scheme for activities, which it hopes to make available on an annual basis.

To find out how residents were feeling one year on from our review and what difference the grants may have begun to have, in October 2016 Healthwatch invited all extra care residents in Lambeth to a tea and chat event at one of the extra care facilities. The event was also open to other older people in the borough as part of Age UK Lambeth's annual Celebrating Age Festival.

In the lead up to the event, we also asked a songwriter and residents from 44 Clarence Avenue (one of the schemes) to write a song on the theme of 'being connected', which they performed on the day. We created a video about the making of the song:

www.healthwatchlambeth.org.uk/extracarereview

Alongside the song premiere, over afternoon tea we asked guests how connected they felt to others and what helps them to feel plugged in, what they do to have fun and keep active, and whether there was anything else they would like to do. The event also included presentations from four organisations about the activities they run locally: South London Cares' events

¹ Extra care schemes are blocks of flats with round-the-clock onsite carer support available.



programme, the Alzheimer's Society Side-by-Side hobbies project, Age UK Lambeth services and Contact the Elderly's monthly afternoon teas.

Event feedback

Connections

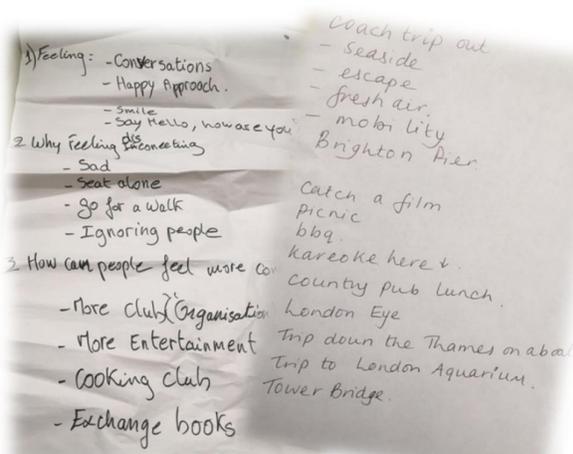
Our guests told us that in their experience family, friends and neighbours were key to generating a feeling of being connected. People talked about the value of sharing meals, going out with others and having visits. Using the phone and computers to stay in touch was important to them too. Extra care residents told us that on-site staff played a central role as well.

Activities

When we asked people what they currently do to have fun and keep active, a wide range of activities were mentioned, from coffee mornings and lunch clubs to gardening, going to the pub, volunteering, playing bingo and pottery classes. But some participants said they don't do much and don't often have fun.

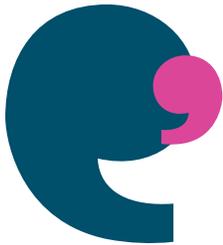
None of the extra care residents mentioned that they had noticed more activities happening in recent months and the Council's commissioner informed us that only one scheme had begun to make use of its grant so far. But people had plenty of ideas about what they would like to see. Top of the list were day trips and opportunities to get out into the community to enjoy activities in different settings. Activities run at schemes by external organisations were also mentioned, such as IT sessions and entertainment performances. Exercise activities were popular too, including swimming, dancing, chair yoga and keep fit sessions.

Song workshops



Many of the topics and ideas explored at our tea and chat event are reflected in the lyrics of the song created by residents at 44 Clarence Avenue (see p.3). The first half of the song describes how difficult it can be to know how to forge connections with other people even in a shared facility. The ideas were based on the experiences of the residents themselves, who told us that they often felt lonely and stuck in their flats.

The second half of the song features some activities that were also popular with our afternoon tea guests - bingo, a shared meal and a trip to the seaside. The other key element in this section of the lyrics is the importance of a friendly, welcoming culture amongst neighbours, and the opportunity for residents to work with



support staff to make things happen. This was pertinent, given what we observed during the development of the song.



We held three workshops with residents and the songwriter to create the song at the scheme, with volunteers from Paxton Time Bank also joining the choir. The volunteers and songwriter told us how surprised they were that there was no input from scheme staff in the workshops or any on-hand support available to residents immediately before or during the sessions, or on the day of the performance itself. The

volunteers also found that the residents became upset at the last workshop because they didn't want the project to end.

This echoes the findings from our investigation in 2015², when we heard from another external organisation facing a similar situation at the scheme.

Conclusion

Our brief programme of activities to revisit extra care provision in Lambeth a year after our review confirms there is a real appetite amongst extra care residents for opportunities to socialise and play an active part in the community. Our experience of running the song workshops again illustrates the pivotal importance of on-site staff in supporting a positive and supportive culture in extra care schemes.

We welcome the news of additional grants from the Lambeth Wellbeing Fund for local organisations to run activity programmes at three extra care schemes in 2017, and we hope the funded programmes will help to foster neighbourliness within and beyond the facilities.

It will remain important for commissioners to continue to monitor the impact of these programmes and the schemes' own activity provision, particularly in relation to offering choice for different interests, supporting resident-led initiatives and building sustained links with the wider community.

² Healthwatch Lambeth extra care review: www.healthwatchlambeth.org.uk/extracarereview



Gotta Make Some New Connections - lyrics

Oh well I'm in my room alone...
And there's no one on the phone
And my heart is like a stone...
And I'm feeling - unconnected

How I hate to feel this way...
Every day is cold and grey
My heart's an empty box of - Milk Tray...
Cause I'm feeling unconnected

I try - I try to get friendly
It's hard - it's hard to explain
I try to do the best that I can
But nobody remembers my name (Comfort?
Olive? Paul? Duane?)

Well I don't know what to do...
Got to find me something new
Cause my heart has got the flu...
And I'm feeling unconnected

Hey everybody at 44! Get out your room and
Knock on a door!
Hey everybody at 44! Get out your room and
Knock on a door!

CHORUS:
*Don't give me your objections
Gotta find some new directions
Gotta make some new connections
Gotta make 'em now!*

A: Hi - we're playing Bingo downstairs
B: I never played Bingo before.
A: Never mind, you can sit at my table
Caller: Eyes down! Here we go! 66
All: Clickety Click!
Caller: 41
All: Time for Fun
Caller: 67
All: Made in Heaven
Caller: Legs 11
B: BINGO!

CHORUS

X: Hi! You coming to the barbecue?
Z: No - don't think so
X: Come on! Sam's firing up the grill!
Burger for you - make that 2!

P: Hi, all - My name's Paul
J: I'm Janet - I helped plan it!
R: I'm Rosemary - You live next to me!
Let's do this again - soon!

CHORUS

X: Morning! Ready for our coach trip!
Z: Brighton here we come!
X: I've got my bucket and spade!
Fasten your seatbelts, here we go!

We're finally here! Brighton Pier!
Fresh Air - the beach is there
Fish and chips - smack your lips
Feel good - so happy - new friends - good
times
What a day - can't stop laughing - ha ha ha
ha ha!

About Healthwatch Lambeth

Healthwatch Lambeth is the independent health and social care champion for local people. We work to ensure your voice counts when it comes to shaping and improving services. We address inequalities in health and care, to help ensure everyone gets the services they need. We are a charity and membership body for Lambeth residents and voluntary organisations.

There are local Healthwatches across the country as well as a national body, Healthwatch England.



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