

Carers coproduction in Norfolk and Waveney: Identity Passport and Carers Awareness Training

Key Learning

- Placing the voices and knowledge of those with lived experience at the heart of coproduction can help shape the services and support people need.
- Involving as many engagement and voice mechanisms as possible can help more people to share their views.
- Ensuring coproduction partners are involved from start to finish can provide innovative working practices and deliver outcomes and materials in new ways.

Who was involved

The Health and Care Act 2022 introduced measures concerning significant legal rights for Unpaid Carers, particularly around Hospital discharge. Caring Together, Carers Voice Norfolk and Waveney and Family Voice Norfolk have been working as equal partners in a coproduction project to capture feedback from Carers across the county regarding their recent experiences within health settings.

Project summary

The coproduction project involved many local Carers - of all ages, including Young Carers and Parent Carers. To ensure as many people as possible were involved, numerous engagement methods were employed, such as online surveys, focus groups across various locations throughout Norfolk and Waveney, and online and in-person workshops and coproduction sessions which took place over a six-month period led by voluntary sector organisations and community networks, all capturing the voices and experiences of Carers. Positive and negative experiences were received, which helped shape recommendations aligning with outcomes for Carers outlined in the Health and Care Act 2022.

The challenges and solutions

A common thread throughout the coproduction engagement revealed that Carers, of all ages, often do not feel valued or recognised by health professionals; this became particularly noticeable to Carers during the hospital discharge process, as many Carers reported frustrating, stressful and often exhausting experiences, which Carers often refer to as 'a fight'. The project determined that there was a need for more awareness from healthcare professionals of the pressures faced by Carers, the diversity of Carers and the range of their caring responsibilities. Specifically, a more consistent and joined-up approach to the identification, support and inclusion of Carers was needed in various settings.

The Outcome

Coproducing a Carers Identity Passport

Carers felt a Carers' Passport would enable them to be recognised as experts and valued by healthcare staff. It was thought that the passport would raise public awareness of the caring role, and link people to support in the community, therefore reducing barriers when needing to speak to healthcare professionals, particularly in GP surgeries. The passport would be available in both hard copy and digital formats.

Carer awareness training for health and social care professionals

Mandatory training for a range of health professionals and staff was identified as a way to increase awareness of the Carers' role, so there is less chance of miscommunication between professionals, Carers and the people they care for.

Carers Voice held an online workshop to see what Carers wanted from a passport; over 100 Carers and professionals attended to discuss the idea and take it forward. Those unable to participate, had an opportunity to share their views through Carers Voice. Information was shared widely, including with those who could not get directly involved. A coproduction Steering Group was established; membership included an equal partnership of the Integrated Care Board, acute hospitals, local NHS Trusts, and Carers.

Carers shaped much of the training content and materials concerning the discharge process, including how training should be delivered through videos, case studies, and voice notes, to ensure materials were as inclusive as possible. The Carers Identity Passport was coproduced and launched in November 2022.