



**Homecare and
Community-Based
Support Service Client
Consultation**

January 2024

Executive Summary

Through an online and paper survey of 37 people in receipt of homecare support via managed account arrangements with Bolton Council, this consultation exercise has helped to gain a clearer picture of residents' experience of the current service. Though only a snapshot, it's allowed us to hear directly from some of those in receipt of this kind of care – often some of the most vulnerable members of our society.

The purpose of this piece of work is to understand users' experience of homecare, so we build on strengths and identify areas for improvement.

The survey provided feedback on the performance of 18 different companies (plus Bolton Reablement Service), serving people across Bolton postcodes from BL1 to BL7. Of the 37 respondents, 16 (43.2%) judged the overall service they'd received as good or excellent; 4 people (10.8%) rated the level of care provided as poor.

People were asked to rank their experience of multiple aspects of the service: from finding initial information about it; to the speed and timeliness of starting their homecare support package; the continuity of care and whether and how any problems had been addressed by their provider.

The detail contained in this report sets out how the quality of provision varies. What comes through clearly though, is a consistency of expectation amongst those surveyed that the service they receive should be of a certain standard: that carers should arrive on time and stay for the full duration of the scheduled visit; that those visits should work around the needs of the person receiving the care and, crucially, that that person should always be treated with dignity and respect.



Role of Bolton CVS

Bolton CVS is the local VCSE infrastructure organisation with an evidenced track record of supporting commissioned community engagement exercises of this kind. As such, our role was first to help Bolton Council produce a survey which we felt would resonate with the sector. Aiming to keep it as simple and accessible as possible was key.

Once we'd agreed on the questions, we then targeted groups working with people who might be in receipt of this kind of care, to circulate the survey as widely as possible. We focused on key forums such as the Preventative Providers Collaborative – this has a membership which includes groups such as Age UK Bolton, Bolton Carers Support, Bolton Dementia Support, Mental Health Independent Support Team (Mhist) and Asian Elders Resource Centre. As well as providing a link to an online survey – which was shared widely through our networks and in our ebulletin – we also provided groups with paper surveys in large font.

The initial intention was to organise, alongside the individual surveys, a series of focus groups to gain deeper insights. We were told by a number of groups, though, that this wouldn't be possible – given the nature and levels of vulnerability of the cohort we were trying to reach. Instead, we agreed that members of staff within the groups who wanted to be involved, would be better placed to conduct face-to-face surveys.

By continuing to promote the survey and continued engagement, we managed to get 37 surveys completed by the end of January. The results are set out on the following page.

Headline results of surveys

- 37 surveys were completed – 24 face-to-face (with the help of Age UK Bolton staff) and 13 online.
- 26 of the respondents are women, 10 are men, 1 chose not to identify their gender.
- 33 are White British, 1 person is White Other, 1 person is Asian or Asian British, 2 didn't say.
- 1 person is in the 55-64 age category, 5 people are in the 65-74 age category, 18 people are in the 75-84 category and 12 people are 85 or above, 1 didn't say.
- 2 people live in BL1, 11 people in BL2, 5 people in BL3, 7 people in BL4, 3 people in BL5, 4 people in BL6 and 2 people in BL7, 3 didn't say.
- 18 different care providers (plus Bolton Reablement Service) are represented across the survey, 7 of whom are Framework Providers, and 11 are DPS/Spot Providers.
- Of the 37 respondents, 19 receive care from a Framework Provider, 18 receive care from a DPS/Spot Provider.
- Across all 37 respondents, 6 people rated the overall care package as excellent (16.2%), 10 as good (27.0%), 14 as average (37.8%) 3 as fair (8.1%) and 4 as poor (10.8%).
- For the Framework Providers, 0 people rated them as excellent (0%), 4 as good (21.1%), 9 as average (47.4%), 2 as fair (10.5%) and 4 as poor (21.1%).
- For the DPS/Spot Providers, 6 people rated them as excellent (33.3%), 6 as good (33.3%), 5 as average (27.8%), 1 as fair (5.6%) and 0 as poor (0%).

Conclusions

Though the sample size of those surveyed – relative to the numbers in receipt of this kind of care – is small, this consultation has helped to shine a light on a service which is vital to so many. It's given a voice to some of the most vulnerable in our society – to allow them to have their say about how they're treated in their own homes.

The results suggest that there is more good practice than bad when it comes to this type of homecare across the borough – with 43.2% of respondents rating the service they receive as good or excellent, compared with the 10.8% who gave a score of poor.

But there are areas for improvement. Issues such as continuity of care, communication, training of staff and language barriers were all referenced when people were asked to give more detailed answers. In amongst the good practice, for some people, the service isn't meeting the high aspirations set for it – to enable them to lead lives in as much comfort and with as much dignity as possible.

Through a deeper examination of the concerns expressed in this consultation and more sharing of best practice across the sector, standards can be raised further.

Finally, a huge debt of gratitude is owed to the staff of Age UK Bolton – without their hard work we would not have completed the face-to-face surveys in the time we had available. Their trusted relationships with those who took part was fundamental to the success of the consultation – and further evidence of the power of the VCSE sector in reaching communities across our town.



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