

**Notes from the Falkirk Carers Forum  
Friday 17 September 2021  
Arnotdale House**

**Present:** Frank Donnelly, Lynne MacDonald, Morven Mack, Jessie-Anne Malcolm, Lesley Paterson, Julie Silcock, Jennifer Totten, Hazel Wotherspoon,

**In Attendance:** Susan Docherty, Laura MacKenzie, Ami McKnight, Kyle MacLachlan, David Smyth,

**1. Welcome**

Susan opened the forum and explained the purpose of today and noted that this forum was an invitation to carers only to discuss a review/redesign of the Falkirk Carers Forum and to provide the opportunity for carers to give their views on this.

Susan then asked everyone in the room and online to introduce themselves.

Jessie-Ann (NHS Public Involvement and Community Engagement) introduced herself both as a professional and personally as a carer. She gave a brief update on the Falkirk Community Hospital and where discussions are now well underway for improving the services it will offer (hoping to duplicate a lot of what is in Stirling Health Village). The current forum includes 6 members of the public and will be opening to the wider public in November.

**2. Open Conversation**

Susan opened the conversation by explaining that historically the forum has been held 4 times a year and held jointly with carers and professionals. Due to the pandemic, the forums moved from in-person meetings to online due to the Covid. Today gives the carers the opportunity to express their thoughts on how the forum should look in the future. Some thoughts are:

- Have some forums that are carers only as sometimes carers don't feel as comfortable voicing their thoughts or concerns in front of professionals and/or a wider audience.
- Getting the balance of time right as professionals can tend to have the time at the start of the forum and this has left very little time for carers to have their say.
- After the pandemic are carers weary of online and is there a preference to face to face? Should we still meet online or both in-person and online?
- Venues – Look at different venues, perhaps community based where we move area each forum to encourage more involvement.
- New name for forum.
- Due to Iain stepping down we need a new Chairperson if anyone would be interested in this role. An email will go out and the chair will always be supported by Susan.
- There is a bigger ask for carer involvement within the statutory and voluntary sector and the feeling is that forums should be more carer led.
- Introduction of more carer reps who will have the opportunity to sit on strategic and planning groups. They should have a place at the forum to bring carer issues to these groups and to feedback to the forum.
- A questionnaire was offered for carers to complete during this forum and the results of this will be attached with these notes.

The thoughts from carers of the points:

Frank – Suggested carers have their say in the first half of the forum then professionals for second half. Still need professionals to attend to keep carers informed of what is happening especially lately with all the changes that are happening.

Hazel – Carers need a voice, but carers should have their say in the later part of the forum as professionals will take away with them (last thing they hear), but professionals should have restricted time to do their part.

Lynne – At times we hear the same information from professionals, for example it can be repeated at each forum. Suggest the need to try and focus on certain topics and invite the appropriate professionals for the topic of that forum.

Ruth – Feels that carers don't get a chance to talk as professionals do all the talking and we run out of time.

Morven – Do not want to exclude professionals, yes, the timings should be restricted, but it is very important that they hear what we have to say. Agree that Carers do not get to express themselves properly due to time constraints. A more topic focused based forum may help with this.

Susan – Consider hosting 3 of the forums a year being carers only with 1 including professionals? It must be recognized we have a good working relationship with partners and professionals and there would be the option to get updates from professionals which can be updated to carers at the forum which is carers only. Important to remember that professionals do wish to participate and respond to carers and some professionals are carers themselves.

Hazel – Most carers start caring later in their life, but we do need better representation from Parent Carers and Young Carers. Perhaps the forums need to be more specific as carers experience and needs are different.

Susan – There is discussions on having a separate Parent Carer Forum going forward. The carers centre is distributing a Parent Carer survey, and this is one of the questions.

Ruth – There is no help for the child to adult transition at all (this as regarding of moving from being a child to adult)

Frank – There is a definite lack of support for this, and transition can be very difficult.

Hazel – If the forum is split there would need to be an option where carers could all come together so there is knowledge and understanding issues which affect all carers.

Frank – Different charities/professionals should feed into forums as well. So separate meetings for different issues such as Alzheimer's, autism etc.

Laura McK – Suggested subgroups to the forums then spokesperson to attend forum?

### **3. Carer Reps**

Susan provided an update that there are three more carer representatives who have been recruited following carer rep training which was delivered to them in March this year. The representatives will have to opportunity to sit and participate on strategic and planning groups which form part of the Health & Social Care Partnership in Falkirk, and they will feed information into the forum. Morven commented that this is a great idea to have more carer representation becoming involved. The fact these carers will have their own expertise area and knowledge will be a positive to help others.

### **4. Renaming/Forum Venue/Times/Dates**

Susan noted it is always difficult to get carers together at the same time, for example, parent carers and working carers may prefer evenings however this is open for thought and discussion. Morven noted that the the IJB meet on a Friday and by chance no meeting was held today which would have clashed with the forum. Jessie Anne gave some options such as the Sensory Centre which has good parking and on a bus route (there was some mention of parking being difficult due to bowling and leisure facilities, this could be investigated). Hazel also commented that community halls are open but would depend on areas though public transport links can be difficult.

Susan also informed the forum that the carers centre is looking towards more community led support where the centre will have a presence in local community hubs and there is a possibility these hubs would also have a function room which would also provide 1:1 support for carers within their own community.

Laura asked the forum to take note of any venues and to consider a roving forum at different locations around Falkirk district area. Hazel agreed this was a good idea to move forum around to the area to respond to the wishes of carers.

## **5. IJB Update**

Morven provided an update, and this will be circulated with these notes.

## **5. Carer Issues**

Frank highlighted the big issue now is for carers and the cared for person accessing support and gave examples such as it is taking longer to get support packages in place. Reporting changes, such as increases to packages, extra daycare is delayed too. Problematic that care companies are closing, losing staff and have a shortage of staff due to various reasons.

Hazel commented that she was offered a good package of care given but it was never put in place. In the Falkirk area there is nothing for the severely disabled.

The forum discussed personal issues being experienced around an Adult Carer Support Plan which was in place but no response from Social Work, lack of Self Directed Support offerings and being told there is a waiting list to access support.

There is a lack of respite options, respite beds are being used for people being discharged from hospital. Now there are seems to be different rules for private and council lead respite.

## **6 A.O.B**

Susan updated on staff changes within the carers centre. David Smyth has changed post from the Adult Carer Support Team to become the centre's Digital Worker which will improve digital support/website content and information going out on social media from the centre. The Young Carers Project have 3 vacancies and the Adult Carers Support Team are recruiting two Telephone Support Workers. Laura noted these posts were funded as a result of the carers survey which was distributed last year, and it is hoped another survey will be done again. To conclude Laura finalized by commenting that carers help other carers, lean on each other for support and share experiences. Encouraged the forum to speak to any carers in their own networks about the forum and they are welcome to join the forum, get involved and have their say.