



Personal Outcomes Stories during COVID: Learning from practice

Your role and organisation: Mark Mulhern, Carer centre manager, East Renfrewshire

How have you been able to keep a focus on what matters to people during COVID?

Like everyone else, our early phase focused on moving interactions online. We used grant funding to make sure that our staff had whatever equipment they needed to work from home. We didn't know what to expect at first with regard to how carer needs might change but things settled into a new pattern quite quickly.

What have you had to do differently and what made this possible?

We extended our hours initially to weekends and evenings as we were worried about carers potentially going into crisis as the normal care supports reduced to avoid risks from the virus. We haven't had the number of carers in crisis that we first expected. But we are not complacent. Some are furloughed from work and maybe some of those have had less to juggle. However I'm expecting that expect others are going to need more support as time goes on.

We have a what's app group for staff now and that has increased social contact between the team. We've also had takeaway food together online and that was a nice social event. Not all staff want to engage in that but it has brought some staff closer together.

What have you noticed that has been better?



It's been interesting for my staff working with young carers. They've been pleasantly surprised by how well some of our young carers are engaging online. Definitely for some, it's a more familiar way to interact and they've been happy to work on their young carer statements this way. With adult carers the surprise there has been that the carers we already work with are engaging more with social opportunities like quizzes and music nights, rather than peer support groups. There has been more uptake of our offer on training around end of life caring, but generally it's the social stuff that's popular.

There is a new understanding of what we do and the nature of the support we provide. I hope that greater understanding and sense of partnership continues with the HSCP.

How did this make you feel?

I feel valued, and that our staff here are valued by the HSCP. I need to feel that I am making a contribution and that is happening just now. We have done loads of work on getting small grants out to carers, and some of that has produced immediate benefits. I feel positive about many of the changes and I'm excited too about how this could continue to develop.

What have you learned through this?

We have learned where online support adds value. We will keep some of this going.

Personally, I had a lot of learning recently which has continued and helped me in this situation. After a period of bereavement and loss in my own family I had a dip last year. I have learned to look after myself better and am continuing to do that. I try to remind my staff how important that is too.