

Design in Social Care Programme

London Borough of Lambeth Project Summary

Providing care to people at home in a way that puts them more in control

Context

Across the country home care plays a critical role in providing support to people when they need it most. It helps people with personal care and household tasks to enable them to maintain their quality of life at home for as long as possible.

Lambeth Council applied to the Design in Social Care programme with Healthwatch Lambeth in 2018 to help them look for opportunities to improve people's experience of home care. Participation in the Design in Social Care programme was also intended to inform wider re-commissioning of home care that the council is embarking on.

The challenge

At any one time there are around 2,000 people in Lambeth receiving home care through services commissioned by Lambeth Council. The majority of home care users are over the age of 65 but the service is also provided to disabled adults and children.

Home care has traditionally been commissioned and delivered on a "time and task" model, prioritising the procedure and time spent on care over meeting the needs of individual people. Like other areas Lambeth has been moving towards a strengths based approach to social care which is aimed at putting people more in control of their own care – focusing on people's own personal goals and aspirations. Accordingly, Lambeth wanted to explore ways of improving people's experience of home care so the service can be more flexible, co-ordinated with other support and people can feel more in control.

What they did

The Design in Social Care programme helped Lambeth to consider areas where they could work with care agencies to re-design aspects of home care. The programme took the team through a structured methodology based on the Design Council's Double Diamond approach – starting with encouraging the team to review the problem they were seeking to address.

In the initial phases Lambeth undertook semi-structured interviews with three groups of people:

- People who had recently started to receive home care services (in the last few months)
- People who had been receiving home care for a number of years
- Informal carers – family or friends of people who received home care

The research uncovered some rich insights about the lives of people they were seeking to improve. In some cases these re-confirmed for the team known views whilst in other areas it brought some new messages about home care.

What they found

The people they spoke to highlighted the importance of **trust** between home care providers and people receiving care and the wider supporting family.

“When I had my independence I wouldn’t have had strangers in, but this woman is like family, she is not like home care”

Home care user

They also highlighted elements regarding the **service provision** itself. The need for effective communication between the care agency and individuals as well as helping to ensure that there were clear expectations all round about the service at the outset were consistent themes which the team heard.

Both care professionals and people receiving care highlighted opportunities to support the social care workforce in having the **right skill competencies** needed for the way home care was intended to be provided in the future. This was about both recognising and valuing the workforce whilst continuing to develop skills needed for the future.

Using the themes the Lambeth team held an ‘ideation workshop’ with home care providers. This enabled providers to hear about the findings from the research and develop their own ideas about ways to improve the delivery of home care across the borough. Using a re-framed set of problem statements the ideation workshop focused on the following three areas:

- *How might we ensure service users have clear expectations and information about the home care service from the outset?*
- *How might we empower the care workforce to be more flexible in the support that is given?*
- *How might we support consistent day-to-day communications (including feedback) between service users and their families with home care workers and agencies?*

Prototyping solutions and next steps

The team have begun to explore prototyping some of the solutions that providers have come up with. Some of these will be held to align with the broader re-commissioning of home care work that the council is taking forward.

- A **new guide for service users who receive home care** helping to give clearer expectations of what people can expect when they commence home care;
- A shift towards taking a more **neighbourhood based approach to home care** in alignment with the shift from community nursing to neighbourhood team working;
- Ways to **improve communications with families and carers** including through the use of technology about who is going to be delivering care, when it is going to be provided and feedback on the care delivered;

Healthwatch is also following up with complementary research on people’s experience of home care. The first round of feedback will be gathered through to the end of 2019, giving a

further opportunity to test and develop the themes from the initial discovery. Future rounds will also help to track the progress and impact of the council's proposed changes.

Lambeth found the programme both provided them with new skills and techniques but has also enabled them to build the working relationship between the Council and Healthwatch.