

# Adults & Communities Engagement Panel Newsletter

**This is the exciting first edition and much anticipated launch of the all-new Adults & Communities Engagement Panel newsletter.**

## Background and Who We Are!



Established in 2019 (and successfully re-launched last year) the Engagement Panel acts as a critical friend to discuss officers within the Adults & Communities department (Leicestershire County Council) proposed engagement plans, service design and policy and strategy development.

The members of the panel are recognised as experts by experience as carers, people who draw on care and support and are joined by a range of officers from the department to reflect the different facets of social care.

## Role and Purpose of the Panel

- To encourage and support the department to increase the extent to which it co-produces its service design with people who are experts by experience, carers and families.
- To provide advice to shape engagement plans and activities.
- To review and make recommendations on the departments proposals around service design and policy and strategy development.
- To review information that is to be shared with people to ensure it is suitable for publication and distribution.



We have produced our first Vlog which you can watch [via YouTube](#)

*Since attending these meetings, I have found them very informative, beneficial and being able to talk to the members and take on board any of the issues they raise and carry these forward with officers.*

**Mrs Christine Radford CC – Lead Member  
Leicestershire County Council**

*"I joined the panel in the hope that my lived experience could make a difference. With this experience and knowledge of social services I felt I could make a valuable contribution to the engagement process."* **From Simone**



*I joined the panel in November 2021 and can honestly say there has been a big positive change and I've really enjoyed and continue to enjoy working on it. I decided to join as I felt my vast experience could really benefit others and help them to have a better quality of life, in a system that hasn't worked as well for me. I also felt I needed to be the voice for those of us with disabilities by showing others without them, how the system should be built and work well. As well as our views being as important as theirs, especially as decisions are made about us and we are the ones that have to live with them.*

**Ellie**

## Aims of this Newsletter

In promoting the work of the panel, this newsletter will be used to share information about relevant meetings, voluntary and Council updates, contact information as well as good news stories (both informative and/or entertaining!). On occasions there will be requests for information and help from you as well as the opportunity to include your personal insights, testimonies, and experiences. Each newsletter will feature different articles and topics that provide an insight into the important work of the Engagement Panel.

## Publication and Distribution

This newsletter will be circulated four times a year. It will be available through the Leicestershire County Council website, the intranet, various other social media platforms as well as paper copies distributed to our community partners across the County.

## This edition – News and Articles

- Working with carers to review Leicestershire County Council web pages.
- Café's, Restaurants & Leisure Centres Support the Carers Passport
- Direct Payments – New Factsheets
- Shared Lives
- Updates

This document contains electronic links to other online web pages, shown as underlined text - so if you are reading this on your computer, you can press the 'Ctrl' and 'Enter' buttons at the same time to follow the link to there.

## Working with carers to review Leicestershire County Council web pages

The carers web pages have not been reviewed for some time and we wanted to ensure that the information is accurate, relevant, and up to date. We contacted some carers from the Engagement Panel, to ask for volunteers to support us with this piece of work as it is important to work with carers, listen to their feedback and take on board their comments to ensure the right changes/updates are made. Several carers came forward.

Carers have reviewed the web pages from their perspective and provided us with constructive feedback on the content and layout, which has been invaluable. During regular meetings each carer has been given the opportunity to provide input, discuss together and all come to an agreement to any changes/updates. We have nearly completed the work and then the next steps will be to work with the web team to make the agreed changes. We are confident the carers web pages will read better for carers looking for support across Leicestershire ensuring they get the right support at the right time. The proposed estimated date to go live is 31 July 2024.

We would like to take the opportunity to say a **BIG THANK YOU** to our carers - Anita, Jenny, Matthew, and Simone, we appreciate you taking time out from your caring responsibilities to help with this work. If you would like to get involved with any future work, please email: [carers@leics.gov.uk](mailto:carers@leics.gov.uk)

#### **Carers**

Carers in my eyes are  
lifesavers  
They make the key  
difference and brighten  
someone's day like bright  
yellow quavers  
In my eyes hats off and  
greatest respect for all  
carers

Bhavin

### **Cafes, Restaurants & Leisure Centres supporting the Carers Passport Across Leicestershire**

There are several café's, restaurants and leisure centres across Leicestershire who offer free hot drinks to carers when they show their carers passport. If you want more information about a venue near you or do not have a carers passport, contact VASL: Support for Carers on 01858 468543 who will be happy to help.

### **Direct Payments – New Factsheets**

As a department we must make sure that people have the right information to make the right choices, particularly when choosing how they receive the support they need. One option that people have is to take a Direct Payment which enables them to have more choice and control. Several factsheets are available to support social care staff to explain Direct Payments to individuals, but comments had been made that they were not easy to understand so defeating the object of why they had been produced. A group from the Engagement Panel who currently have a Direct Payment got together to review and produce new versions of the existing factsheets.

Though a long-standing recipient of a Direct Payment Jenny advised that she still found the system difficult to navigate and felt it was important to try and make the process easier. Phil stated that one of the reasons he joined the Panel was to make improvements and has found it hugely rewarding to see the group's efforts make a difference in the production of revised factsheets and updating the pages on the Leicestershire County Council website. He added that whilst the original fact sheets were factually correct, the group were able to rewrite the documents from the perspective of someone new to the information and those who are already in receipt of a Direct Payment. Each factsheet was broken down and people's lived experience used to shape the information and language used.

The group advised they found the experience fulfilling and enjoyed working together. Early feedback has shown that they achieved their aim of making the information easier to understand hopefully encouraging and supporting more people to consider taking a Direct Payment. For more information on Direct Payments go to <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/adult-social-care-and-health/paying-for-care/direct-payments>

## Shared Lives

After reading an article in Shared Lives news about how important it is for those that go to this service have an opportunity to share their experiences, we thought we'd try something different rather than the usual surveys or monitoring process via a review. Together with the Engagement Panel we'd thought it would be a great idea to meet up and talk to each other. Four members of the panel said they would like to be part of this, so a date was arranged at Meadow Barn View. Despite the awful weather it was a great turn out. Panel members did a wonderful job of talking to those who had come along, finding out what they were up to on a day-to-day basis, how things were for them, what might be missing, how things could be better. Our hope that individuals would find it easier to be open and honest with someone who may also have a service rather than staff members succeeded and panel members also learnt a lot about shared lives and the service they provide. We will be looking to do more of these sessions in different locations. To find out more about Shared Lives go to <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/site/search?search=shared+lives>

## New Developments & Updates

### 1. New Way to Receive Invoices

If you pay towards the support, you receive from Adult Social Care you can now receive the invoice for your charge via email rather than by post. If you are interested in doing so please contact Adult Social Care Finance on 0116 305 7474 or email [ascfininvoicequeries@leics.gov.uk](mailto:ascfininvoicequeries@leics.gov.uk) please include your SSIS number or Customer number in your email or have this information ready for when you call. These numbers can be found in the top right-hand corner of your invoice.

### 2. New number for HART and Crisis Response Service (CRS)

There is now one single contact point for HART and CRS for people who have a service and may need to cancel care calls or make changes. The number is 0116 305 0495 choose Option 2.

### 3. Getting in touch with my allocated worker

If you have a social care worker currently supporting you, this is called your allocated worker. Whilst they are working with you, they should always be your first point of contact to help with any queries or information relating to your social care needs. There is now a tool on the Leicestershire County Council web site to help you find out their contact details are. You will need to have your LAS ID number (which is written on correspondence that you have from Leicestershire County Council) or your NHS number (which will be on any medicines you have or letters from a health worker). Enter this number in the search box. You will find the look up tool on <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/contact-adult-social-care>. Or go to the Leicestershire County Council home page enter "Contact Adult Social Care" in the search box to get to the correct page.

### 4. How would you prepare for an emergency?

Did you know there is a new website to advise what to do in an emergency called Prepare which gives advice on how people can take simple steps to protect themselves from various risks and emergencies including flooding, fires, and power cuts. For more information, please visit the [website](#). There is specific advice for disabled people and carers as well, please click [here](#)

## Conclusion and Your Voice

Thank you for taking time to read this Newsletter. If you know of any other people, departments and agencies that would find it helpful and informative then please pass it on. Also, please let us know and we will add to our distribution list ready for our next edition. Finally, if you are part of this important engagement group or have been in the past, please get in touch to tell us your story.

Get in touch – [A&C-Strategy@leics.gov.uk](mailto:A&C-Strategy@leics.gov.uk) or 0116 305 4886. **We hope you enjoy our first edition. Matthew, Bhavin & Jane**