

Dementia Select Committee – Hearing 29th March 2011

Simon Bannister (individual interview 2.15 and Panel 3.15)

Biography

Simon is Neighbourhood Development Coordinator within the Cultural Services section of Ashford Borough Council. Over the last three years he has been in the very unusual position of straddling public and voluntary sector dementia services. He is Chairman of the Ashford and Shepway Dementia Working Group and in this role has gained a great deal of experience on maximising the role of the voluntary sector. He believes fervently that if we are going to improve services for people with dementia we need to improve the integration of services; increase the role of the voluntary sector to co-design services; mobilise volunteers and communities; facilitate people to establish and run self help groups and mentoring schemes; work with carers, and reduce the stigma sufferers face.

Themes & Questions

1. Please can you introduce yourself and tell us something of your interest in and current work associated with dementia?
2. Could you please tell us about the Ashford and Shepway Dementia Working Group – what are its aims and objectives and how does the work of this group feed into or have the opportunity to influence other work on dementia in Kent?
3. Could you please elaborate on your statement regarding the integration of services – in your view, how well integrated are services now and what actions should we be taking to ensure that services in the future are co-designed to be person (or family) centred and supportive?
4. Current funding pressures mean that many Voluntary Sector organisations on which people have come to depend are themselves facing uncertain futures while trying to continue providing services and support – given that many have arisen to address unmet need in local areas, how can these local roles and services be protected as future services are commissioned?
5. Can you comment, from your own experience, on how the voluntary sector is or could be more involved in the work of local GP practices in order to contribute to advice and support for people with dementia and their families?
6. In addition to national campaigns to raise awareness about dementia, what in your view can be done locally to both inform, and mobilise communities in order both to reduce stigma (among all age groups) and forge supportive community networks?
7. Carers for people with dementia face multiple challenges – some are reluctant to accept help, under the misconception that this in any way signifies a failure to cope; some are unable to access support for themselves as the person they support does not accept their own situation and is unable to empathise with that of their carer– what advice would you offer to people in this position and what type of interventions or services could help to address these difficult situations?