Surrey Citizens Hub - Information and Advice

Overview

The Surrey Citizens Hub is the development of two high street hubs in Redhill and Epsom, run by and set up for disabled people - providing information and advice, advocacy, brokerage, peer support, direct payments support and employment advice. A programme is currently underway to extend the model to across all the 11 districts in Surrey to support the development of other user-led organisations.

Citizens' hubs support the agenda to transform the way in which adult social care is delivered by ensuring that people have access to peer support and appropriate information about services and support available in local and community settings. The citizens' hubs also have an important role in supporting people using direct payments or personal budgets and potentially assisting with the self assessment process.

In September 2009, Surrey County Council, Surrey Coalition of Disabled People, Surrey Independent Living Council (SILC), Surrey Disabled Peoples’ Partnership and Action for Carers Surrey were successful in bidding to the Department of Health South East (DOHSE) to pilot a user led ‘first stop hub’ in Epsom. The project was awarded £40,000 by the DOHSE for set up costs. Epsom was selected as the first location to coincide with the roll out of self directed support across Surrey. This was one of four successful bids within the region. Surrey County Council contributed a further £96,975 from the Social Care Reform Grant towards the lease of the building and set up costs. The Epsom Hub opened in September 2010.

A second citizens' hub was set up in Redhill,
which is also within the Right to Control Trailblazer area and opened in May 2011. Funding of £54,242 was made available from the Right to Control fund for the lease and legal fees whilst building works were covered by the Social Care Reform Grant. Both leases for the premises are held by Surrey Independent Living Council to illustrate that the Hubs are independent of the local authority.
Outcomes

- Local people have easy access to information and advice that empowers and supports them.
- Provides a focus for people in the local area and local people have ownership of the hub.
- People have access to community based services and information about services, equipment which enable them to live independently.
- A visible and accessible first stop hub for the local community linked to Surrey’s developments around universal services, self-direct support and promoting sustainable communities.
- Integrated networks between all agencies providing services in the area.
- Public bodies in Surrey understand the value of and are committed to supporting user led organisations.
- Public bodies actively support user led organisations to engage with disabled people and carers, in particular those who are seldom heard, and to involve them in the co-design of services and policies.
- All citizens have the opportunity to access and to be involved in local user led organisations.
- More disabled people are empowered active citizens and are supported into voluntary or paid work.

Since the two citizens' hubs have been operating, six of the volunteers have gone onto find paid employment. Each Hub has 16 core volunteers. In June 2011, there were 25 active volunteers at the Epsom hub and 17 at the Citizens' Hub Redhill. The role of shift leader has enabled volunteers to develop skills to prepare them for responsibility in paid or voluntary work.

The most frequent enquiries at the hubs are about equipment closely followed by benefits. Others include advocacy, Right to Control, education,
employment, holidays, housing, parking, borough council services and leisure.

Footfall has fluctuated at Epsom with a peak of 216 visitors in August 2011, and the lowest figure of 83 in June 2011. Average monthly footfall at Hub Epsom is 129 visitors.

Figures for Redhill are available from May 2011 with 99 visitors in that initial month. Both footfall and enquiries are increasing with an exceptional 323 visitors in July 2011. Average footfall at Hub Redhill is 244 visitors per month.

"We have had loads of people coming in who need help. It is good for me to be able to do something positive for other people." (June 2011 DB volunteer Redhill)

"The rewarding experience of seeing volunteers blossom and gain confidence and making a real difference to customers." (Shift leader)

"I love coming and learning new skills on the computer and finding information and being a receptionist" JS (Redhill volunteer, June 2011)
What Next?

Now that two citizens' hubs are operational this is an appropriate time to develop a strategy for further development to ensure a sustainable future for the citizens' hubs in Surrey. The ULO Board agreed that the leases for the two current Citizens' Hubs would be held by Surrey Independent Living Council to emphasise that the project is supported and owned by User Led Organisations and is independent of Surrey County Council.

The strategic aim is to develop citizens' hubs across the County within a sustainable financial model. Opportunities are currently being pursued to identify other locations across the County to replicate the good work of the Hub Epsom and the Hub Redhill.
Key learning points

1. **Shared experiences and partnerships:**

   - There were four regional pilot areas selected to developing user led organisations in 2009/10, members of the ULO Board have continued to meet with colleagues in the other local authorities involved to learn and share experiences from the other seven Right to Control National Trailblazer Areas.
   - Surrey's approach to delivering this project was influenced by the existence of already established user led organisations at county level and a wish to increase involvement by disabled people at a local level.

2. **Location:**

   - The two Surrey citizens' hubs are in highly visible high street locations in areas coinciding with the roll out of Self Directed Support and the Right to Control Tailblazer area (Epsom and Ewell and Reigate and Banstead). The location has proved to be an important feature of the citizens' hubs with 88% of Epsom visitors and 62% of Redhill visitors using the hubs in June 2011 because they were 'just passing'. Despite the hubs having been promoted in several local papers, none of the visitors cited 'local press' as the reason they knew about the hubs. Knowledge of the hubs through leaflets and posters was also very low.

1. **Support Brokers:**

   - Support Brokers based in local teams in Adult Social Care will be the key link between the citizens' hubs and the service.