

**ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL  
SERVICE USER CONSULTATION  
HOME CARE SERVICE**

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## **Executive Summary**

### **Introduction**

This report details the main findings to emerge from a programme of research with people who receive a Homecare service from Aberdeenshire Council carried out by Lowland Market Research on behalf of Aberdeenshire Council, Social Work and Housing Department.

The main objectives of the survey were to ascertain people opinions of the service they received from the homecare service.

A three stage methodology was developed which included a postal questionnaire sent to all 2119 people who were receiving a homecare service at the time of the research, 24 one to one depth interviews with homecare clients and a focus group discussion with carers.

### **Research Outputs - Self Completion Survey**

Sixty percent of respondents said that they had been assessed or re-assessed by Social Work Services in the past 6 months. Twenty four percent have been re-assessed between 6 and 12 months ago and 16% state that it has been over 12 months. Just over half (55%) of respondents said that this assessment was undertaken by the Home Care supervisor, with a further 26% stating it was the Care manager.

Ninety one percent of respondents said that they have a Single Shared Assessment folder in their home. Almost three quarters (74%) of all respondents said that the folder contained a Care Plan. This is followed by a Carers Timetable (61%) and Communication Sheets (58%). The item least likely to be contained in the folder is Medication Management Documents (33%).

Respondents indicated that the most important thing that the Home Carer assists them with is "Assistance with washing, bathing and showering", 73% stating this. This is followed by assistance with dressing (47%), assistance with medication (28%) and meal preparation (26%).

Seventy five percent of respondents said that the service they receive from their carer is good all of the time, with a further 22% stating they receive a good service most of the time. Only 3% said they receive a good service some of the time and no respondents said the service was good none of the time.

Overall, respondents were very positive regarding homecare staff. Respondents indicated that staff are always trustworthy (95%), friendly (93%) and caring (90%). The only issue to score less than 80% was punctuality. Seventy one percent of respondents said that staff were always punctual, 21% often and 8% said sometimes.

Satisfaction with different aspects of the homecare service is also very high. Across a range of service attributes, in excess of 90% of respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with all of them. The only issue where a large number of respondents disagreed with the statement was regarding "You were given enough information about what tasks you can and cannot ask the Home Carer to do", 27% said no to this statement.

Respondents indicated that the type of tasks they think their Home Carers could do that they are not doing at present would include, light cooking, housework, laundry, ironing, shopping and make the bed.

Ninety nine percent of respondents said that they like having someone to talk to. A further 97% said that they understand that staff restricted in the functions that they carry out. In general over 80% of respondents agree with the positive statements such as the tasks that the Home Carer provides are carried out at a time that suits them, they feel the service suits their needs and there has been continuity between carers in the nature of the tasks they deliver.

Forty one percent of respondents think that communication/feedback from the service could be improved, although only 27% of respondents believed that they should have more say in how the Home Care Service is run.

The main elements of the Home Care Service that people value most is assistance with personal care, 54% stating it was their first or second most important aspect. This is followed by support to live in your own home, 53% selecting it as their first or second choice.

The types of changes that people would like to the services provided included carers having more time in house, later bedding times, housework done, time for laundry, more home cooked meals (less microwave meals) and continuity of carers.

### **Depth Interviews**

The types of services received included assistance in the morning with washing and dressing. They may also receive additional support during the day which may include assistance with medication, making lunch and going to the toilet and possibly help with undressing and being put to bed in the evening

Most people thought that the level of service they receive was suitable at the moment and believed that it would increase as they required it to do so.

The majority of people found out about the Homecare Service after a stay in hospital, through the hospital discharge process or through another crisis situation in their lives. Most people said that they had little if any input into the type of services they would receive from Homecare, they stated that the Homecare supervisor or the Hospital decided on the care required and made the arrangements.

The service received from the Homecare staff makes a significant difference to their lives. The Homecare staff give the family carers a welcome break from their caring responsibilities also without the support of the Homecare Service many people would not be able to live successfully in their own homes.

Communication and information from the Homecare Service can be limited. Most people said that there would have been some initial information provided at the commencement of the service but little ongoing information.

Most people stated that if they needed information or an increase in support or to get a different service they would contact the Homecare Supervisor. All of the respondents indicated that they have the phone number of the Homecare Supervisor and would have no problem at all contacting them and discussing any issues that they may have. If clients wanted to contact the supervisor they could do so quite easily.

In general, most respondents said that the service received from the Homecare Staff is of a very high standard and are satisfied with the range of services. People liked the routine of having the carers in and they also provided a contact with the outside world.

Respondents indicated a variety of improvements to the service including general housework such as hovering, dusting and cleaning, as well as a slightly more extensive meal preparation service, not just microwave meals. In addition to this people would like a later tuck in service and some flexibility in the service possibly undertake the types of tasks people would do in their own homes such as change a light bulb for instance.

### **Focus Group with Carers**

All of the carers involved in the focus group stated that the Homecare services provided consisted of practical help with regard to personal care including bathing and dressing. This can range from once a day to several times per day depending on the needs of the service user. In addition to this some people had their meals prepared for them.

Meal preparation consists of prepared microwave meals. Members of the focus group would like this to be widened to include such things as making a scrambled egg or a plate of home made soup to be heated up.

Most people stated that they would like help with housework but they do not get it. A common view was that less and less being provided by the homecare service and more and more being put onto the family carer.

Most people said that they became aware of the Homecare services either because of a hospital admission and before the discharge people would be informed about the homecare team. Alternatively, they became aware of the service because of some form of crisis. Most people stated that there is not a lot of information available out there on Homecare services.

All of the focus group said that the services provided by Homecare are very useful. They said that it takes a weight off the shoulders of the family carers. The quality of the Homecare service is also generally thought to be very high.

The general view is that reviews and assessment of service doesn't normally happen until there is a problem. If there is a crisis then there is an escalation of service. If all is well and people are not shouting out for additional help then you are assumed to be coping and are alright.

Overall, people are pleased with the type and level of service provided. They do however, have a variety of suggestions which could help improve the service provided. These include minor jobs around the house such as changing a light bulb, washing windows, empty the bin, hovering and dusting. They would also like the homecare staff to be able to have a slightly broader remit with regard to meal preparation. They would like them to be able to heat a tin of soup or make scrambled eggs for instance.

Members of the focus groups would also like homecare staff to have more training in dealing with elderly people and understanding the conditions they may have. This may include more training for homecare staff on issues to do with confidentiality and dignity and also providing more specialist services such as those required by people with Alzheimers, Dementia or Parkinsons.

## 1.0 Introduction

This report details the main findings to emerge from a programme of research with people who receive a Homecare service from Aberdeenshire Council carried out by Lowland Market Research on behalf of Aberdeenshire Council, Social Work and Housing Department.

## 1.1 Objectives

The main objectives of the survey were to ascertain people opinions of the service they received from the homecare service.

## 1.2 Methodology

A three stage methodology was developed as follows;

### **Postal Self Completion Questionnaire**

Questionnaires were sent to the contact address of the 2119 people who were receiving a homecare service at the time of the research. The questionnaire was accompanied by a FREEPOST envelope in which to return it.

In total 934 completed questionnaires have been received. This is a response rate of 44%. A response rate such as this should be put in context. Questionnaires sent out to service users would ordinarily elicit a response rate in the region of 25% - 30%. In the case of people receiving a homecare service they may be more likely to respond because regular and personal contact with the homecare staff.

### **One to One Depth Interviews**

Depth interviews were conducted with 24 people who have personal experience of using Aberdeenshire councils homecare service. Interviewees were randomly selected and represented a cross section of service users.

### **Focus group with carers**

A focus group discussion was developed with carers to ascertain their views and opinions with regard to the homecare service

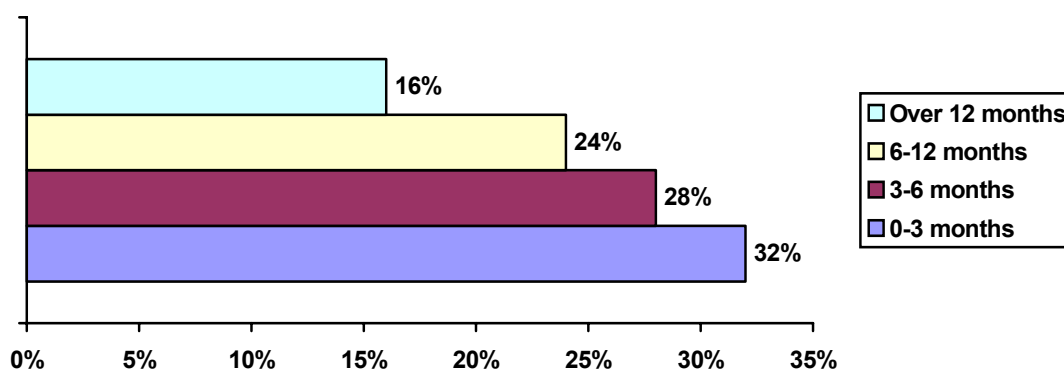
## 2.0 Survey Responses

### 2.1 Postal Survey

Thirty two percent of respondents said that they have been re-assessed by Social Work Services in the last 3 months, a further 28% have been re-assessed in the past 3-6 months. Twenty four percent have been re-assessed between 6 and 12 months ago and 16% state that it has been over 12 months.

#### Q1 Have you been assessed or re-assessed by Social Work Services in the last:

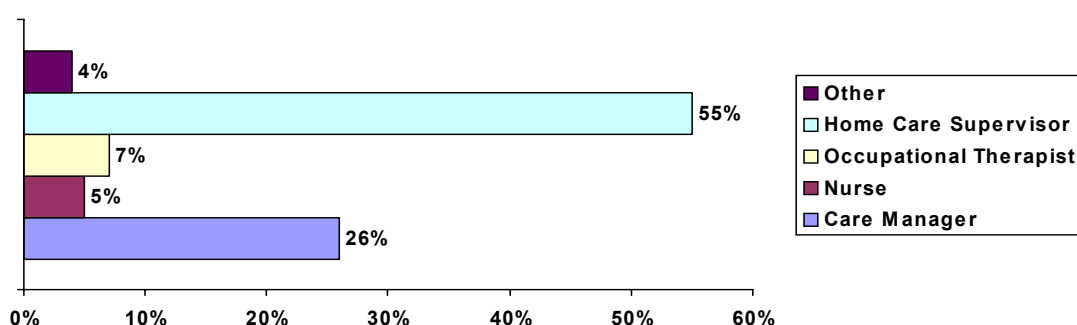
0-3 months	32%
3-6 months	28%
6-12 months	24%
Over 12 months	16%



Fifty five percent of respondents said that it was the Homecare Supervisor that completed the assessment. This is followed by 26% who stated that it was completed by a care manager. Seven percent of respondents said the assessment was completed by an Occupational Therapist and 5% said a nurse.

**Q2 Who completed the assessment?**

Care Manager	26%
Nurse	5%
Occupational Therapist	7%
Home Care Supervisor	55%
Other	4%



Ninety one percent of respondents said that they have a Single Shared Assessment folder in their home. Almost three quarters (74%) of all respondents said that the folder contained a Care Plan. This is followed by a Carers Timetable (61%) and Communication Sheets (58%). The item least likely to be contained in the folder is Medication Management Documents (33%).

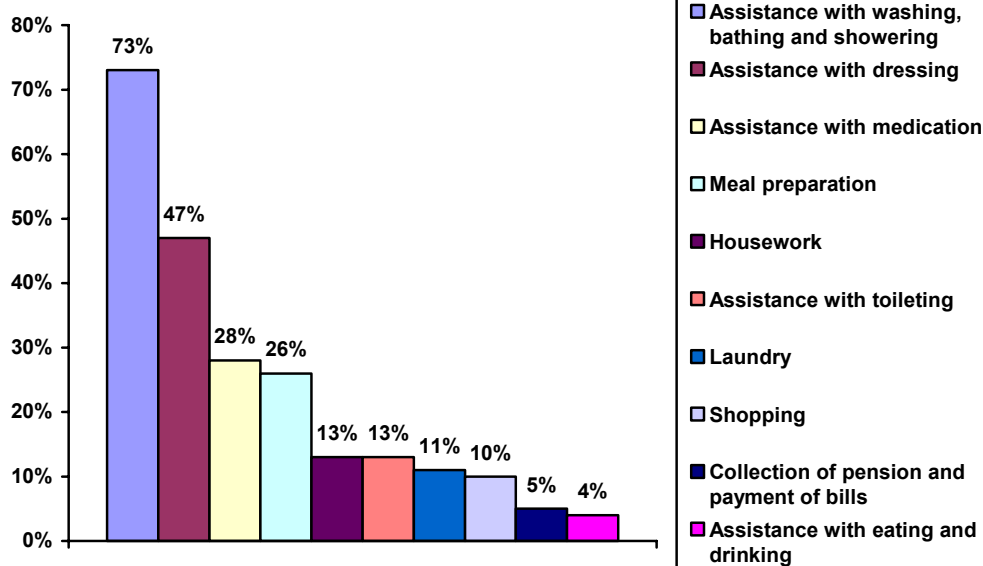
**Q3 If yes, does it include:**

Care Plan	74%
Carers Timetable	61%
Communication Sheets	58%
Single Shared Assessment	54%
Review Form	44%
Medication Management Documents	33%

Respondents indicated that the most important thing that the Home Carer assists them with is “Assistance with washing, bathing and showering”, 73% stating this. This is followed by assistance with dressing (47%), assistance with medication (28%) and meal preparation (26%).

**Q4 What are the three most important things that your Home Carer assists you with?**

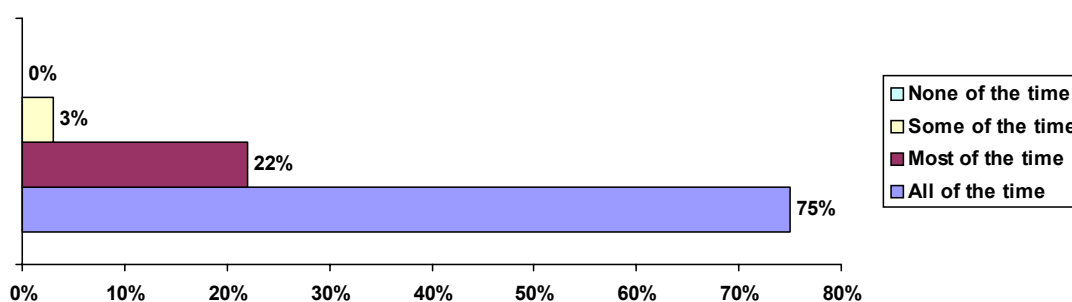
Assistance with washing, bathing and showering	73%
Assistance with dressing	47%
Assistance with medication	28%
Meal preparation	26%
Housework	13%
Assistance with toileting	13%
Laundry	11%
Shopping	10%
Collection of pension and payment of bills	5%
Assistance with eating and drinking	4%



Seventy five percent of respondents said that the service they receive from their carer is good all of the time, with a further 22% stating they receive a good service most of the time. Only 3% said they receive a good service some of the time and no respondents said the service was good none of the time.

**Q5 In general, do you think that the service you receive from your carer is good?**

All of the time	75%
Most of the time	22%
Some of the time	3%
None of the time	0%



Respondents were asked to consider various aspects of the Homecare staff. Overall, respondents were very positive the homecare staff. The number of respondents stating that the staff are always trustworthy (95%), friendly (93%) and caring (90%). The only issue to score less than 80% was punctuality. Seventy one percent of respondents said that staff were always punctual, 21% often and 8% said sometimes.

**Q6 In general, do you find our staff:**

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
Well trained	83%	13%	4%	0%
Friendly	93%	6%	1%	0%
Reliable	84%	12%	4%	0%
Punctual	71%	21%	8%	0%
Helpful	88%	9%	3%	0%
Flexible	82%	13%	5%	0%
Caring	90%	8%	2%	0%
Trustworthy	95%	5%	1%	0%

Satisfaction with different aspects of the homecare service is also very high. Across a range of service attributes, in excess of 90% of respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with all of them.

**Q7 With regard to the quality of services provided by Aberdeenshire Home Care Service, how would you rate the following?**

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Not Satisfied
The response of the Home Carer to requests	76%	23%	2%
The Home Carer's ability to deal with problems	74%	24%	1%
The standard of care provided by your Home Carer	78%	21%	1%
The Home Care supervisor's ability to deal with problems	62%	32%	6%

Respondents were asked to consider a variety of statements about the home care service. As the table below highlights almost 100% of respondents agreed that the various elements were adhered to. Examples of which include being treated with respect, having a good relationship, understands their needs and shows consideration for privacy and dignity. The only issue where a large number of respondents disagreed with the statement was regarding “You were given enough information about what tasks you can and cannot ask the Home Carer to do”, 27% said no to this statement.

**Q8 Do you feel that:**

	Yes	No
The Home Carer knew about your needs before they started providing your service	100%	0%
You were given enough information about what tasks you can and cannot ask the Home Carer to do	73%	27%
You have a good relationship with your Home Carer	99%	1%
The Home Carer treats your home with respect	100%	0%
The Home Carer treats you with respect when carrying out personal care	99%	1%
They show consideration for your privacy and dignity	99%	1%
The Home Carer fully respects your daily routines	99%	1%
The Home Carer only enters those parts of your home where you have given them permission to do so	99%	1%
The service recognises your social, cultural and spiritual preferences	98%	2%
The Home Carer communicates with you in your first/preferred language	99%	1%

Respondents were asked to state what tasks they think their Home Carers could do that they are not doing at present. The types of tasks suggested are outlined below. A full list can be found in the appendices.

- Light cooking
- Housework
- Laundry
- Ironing
- Shopping
- Make the bed

Ninety nine percent of respondents said that they like having someone to talk to. A further 97% said that they understand that staff restricted in the functions that they carry out. In general over 80% of respondents agree with the positive statements such as the tasks that the Home Carer provides are carried out at a time that suits them, they feel the service suits their needs and there has been continuity between carers in the nature of the tasks they deliver.

Forty one percent of respondents think that communication/feedback from the service could be improved, although only 27% of respondents believed that they should have more say in how the Home Care Service is run.

**Q10 Please consider the following aspects of the Home Care Service and indicate your response:**

	Yes	No
Do you like having someone to talk to?	99%	1%
Do you understand that staff are restricted in the functions that they can carry out?	97%	3%
Are the tasks that the Home Carer provides carried out at a time that suits you?	96%	4%
Do you feel the service you receive suits your current needs?	94%	6%
Has there been continuity between carers in the nature of the tasks they deliver?	92%	8%
Does your Home Carer visit at the expected time each day?	90%	10%
If you have requested the supervisor to change the Home Carer's visit to either earlier/later than usual, do you find they are willing to do this?	87%	13%
Do you think that the length of each visit from the Home Carer is enough?	85%	15%
Do you think that communication/feedback from the service could be improved?	41%	59%
Have you ever needed to change the number of visits your Home Carer makes?	33%	67%
If so, was this easily arranged for you?	86%	14%
Do you believe that you should have more say in how the Home Care Service is run?	27%	73%

The main elements of the Home Care Service that people value most is Assistance with personal care, 54% stating it was their first or second most important aspect. This is followed by support to live in your own home, 53% selecting it as their first or second choice.

In contrast to these, the least important aspects were practical help around your home, 46% giving it a rating of 6 or 7, followed by Company (37% giving it a rating of 6 or 7).

**Q11 What do you value most about the Home Care Service?**

	1 – Most Important	2	3	4	5	6	7 – Least Important	Ticked not ranked
Practical help around your home	12%	5%	9%	11%	12%	18%	28%	4%
Support to live in your own home	37%	16%	16%	10%	7%	6%	2%	6%
Feeling safe	8%	12%	13%	16%	22%	14%	8%	7%
Having a community alarm	17%	10%	13%	14%	12%	11%	16%	7%
Regular visits from a carer	26%	23%	17%	14%	8%	4%	1%	7%
Assistance with personal care	32%	22%	13%	7%	6%	7%	7%	7%
Company	8%	7%	11%	15%	15%	20%	17%	7%

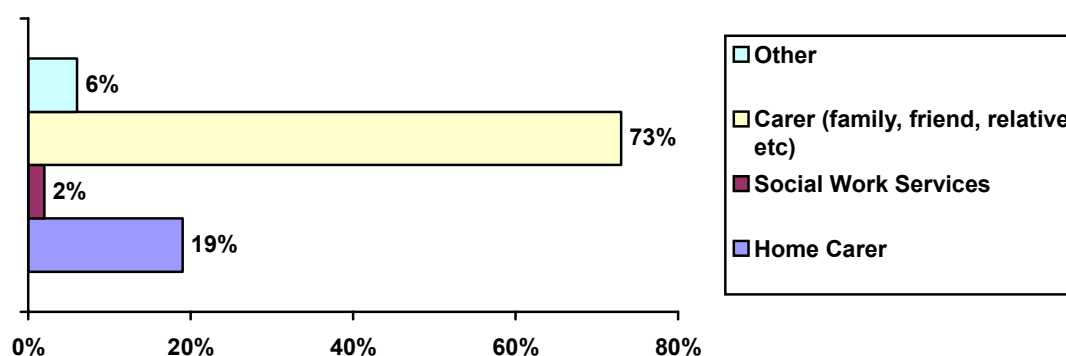
Respondents were asked to state what changes they would make to the Home Care Service which would improve their quality of life. The changes suggested are outlined below. A full list can be found in the appendices.

- Carers having more time in house
- Later bedding times
- Housework done
- Time for laundry
- More home cooked meals, less microwave meals
- Continuity of carers

Two thirds (66%) of respondents said that they received assistance from someone to complete this questionnaire. The largest number of people who received assistance did so from a carer (family, friend, relative), 73% stating this. A further 19% received help from a Home Carer.

**Q13 If yes, from whom?**

Home Carer	19%
Social Work Services	2%
Carer (family, friend, relative etc)	73%
Other	6%



Respondents were given the opportunity to make any final comments. The majority of the comments given are very positive, with people stating how satisfied they are with the service and how much it helps them. Examples of other comments are listed below. A full list can be found in the appendices.

- It is good to have regular carers most of the time
- More help with preparing and serving food
- Help with housework
- More time for the carers to chat
- Assistance to get out the house

## 2.2 Face to face depth interviews with Homecare Clients

Depth interviews were undertaken with a cross section of service users to ascertain their views and opinions regarding the Homecare service.

As part of the review of home care services, 24 people who have personal experience of using Aberdeenshire councils homecare service were invited to take part on an individual interview. These interviews were conducted during November 2008. Respondents were interviewed in their own home on a one to one basis.

Interviewees were randomly selected and represented a cross section of service users in that their assessed needs varied from an individual who required minimal help with remembering to take medication, to individuals who required 2 people to help with personal care 4 time a day 7 days a week. Individuals interviewed represented a wide geographical spread across Aberdeenshire with people living in town's villages and in isolated rural areas.

Of those interviewed 10 (42%) were male and 14 (58%) were female. The average age of the people interviewed was 81 years.

### Types of Services Received

The type and level of service provided to homecare service users can vary depending on each persons requirements. The majority of people interviewed indicated that they have a carer come into their home in the morning to assist them with washing and dressing and preparing breakfast. Some clients will receive additional support during the day which will include giving them their medication and additional visits to make lunch or to assist them with going to the toilet. In addition to this many of the people receiving homecare services will also have meals prepared for them and helped to get undressed and put into bed in the evening. Some clients will receive the Homecare Services 5 days per week Monday to Friday whilst others will receive the service 7 days per week.

Most people thought that the level of service they receive was as much as they need at the moment. Some of the clients stated that they would probably need more care as they got older or their health deteriorates. The perception is that the level of service would increase as they require it. They stated that to have the level of service increased they would speak to the Homecare supervisor.

In addition to the above personal care services some of the interviewees indicated that the Homecare staff will assist with the payment of bills, some laundry such as bed linen and some occasional shopping. These items that are non personal care are provided more sporadically than the core personal care elements.

### **Initial Contact with Homecare Services**

The majority of people found out about the Homecare Service after a stay in hospital. As part of the discharge process the Homecare Service was contacted and a care package created. Several interviewees stated that they had been referred by their GP to the Homecare Supervisor and others stated that it was the Community Nurse that informed them about the Homecare Service.

### **Usefulness and Benefits of the Homecare Service**

Many of the respondents indicated that they had little if any input into the type of services they would receive from Homecare. Most people indicated that the Homecare supervisor or the Hospital decided on the care required and made the arrangements.

Respondents indicated that the service received from the Homecare staff makes a significant difference to their lives. Many of them are elderly couples with one of them providing care for the other person. The health of the main carer is often not good, perhaps being frail themselves or having other health problems. The Homecare staff give the family carers a welcome break from their caring responsibilities, it is also reassuring to the family that carers are going in. Without the support of the Homecare Service these people would not be able to live successfully in their own homes.

In addition to the actual Homecare service provided several of the respondents said that an additional benefit is the Homecare staff provide a contact with the outside world and social contact. "The carers lift the clients spirits when they come in". "They are bright and cheerful and lift the clients spirits for the day as they laugh and joke with him".

In general, most respondents said that the service received from the Homecare Staff is of a very high standard. Only one person was slightly critical saying that the level of service depended on the carer coming in.

In general the Homecare Service provides the types of assistance that the clients need help with and they are satisfied with this range of services. Several things were mentioned which clients would like as part of the Homecare Service. These included some general housework such as hovering, dusting and cleaning, as well as a slightly more extensive meal preparation service. Several people said they would like some more cooked meals rather than just the microwave meals. Comment was made that people would even prefer something like a tin of soup heated, egg and bacon or a boiled egg on toast for instance.

### **Likes and Dislikes of the Homecare Service**

Homecare clients are in general very positive about the service they receive. As stated previously, many stated that they would not be able to stay in their own homes without the support of the Homecare Service, their reliance on this service makes them very thankful and quite uncritical of it.

The aspects of the service which they like included;

- The carer coming in everyday.
- Carers cheer clients up.
- Nice to chat with the carer.
- Punctuality of carers.
- Carers are capable and knowledgeable.

The aspects of the service which they disliked included

- Don't like to have changes of carers.
- Holiday cover is not good – sometimes relief carers don't turn up.
- Medication management can be difficult unless the chemist has signed the medication management sheet.
- Not enough information given about the service.

### **Information and Communication**

Five of the clients interviewed stated that they did not receive any information about the Homecare Service. The other respondents said they received information prior to the service being implemented from their doctor, occupational therapy, homecare supervisor, community/district nurse or the hospital. The majority of people received their information from the Homecare Supervisor. The information provided included the type of support which would be offered and its frequency.

People received information orally from supervisor and other sources as well as leaflets and information contained in a yellow folder. Most people stated that the information they received at the time was useful and relevant to them. There was no indication of any ongoing information being provided. People stated that the information they may have had could have been 5 years ago and had not really been updated. In addition to this other people stated that they were not entirely sure what types of services can and cannot be provided. It was also mentioned that some people had a leaflet that listed all the jobs the carers were to undertake but the leaflet had been lost.

In contrast to the above responses, most people stated that if they needed information or an increase in support or to get a different service they would contact the Homecare Supervisor. All of the respondents indicated that they have the phone number of the Homecare Supervisor and would have no problem at all contacting them and discussing any issues that they may have.

### **Contact with Supervisor and Ongoing Assessment**

Contact with a Homecare Supervisor varies from speaking with them on the phone in the last couple of days to seeing them sometime over the past 3-6 months. Most people stated that if they wanted to see or contact a Homecare Supervisor they could do so quite easily by contacting them by telephone.

Clients indicated that a Homecare Supervisor carried out an assessment prior to the initial homecare services being provided. For many people this assessment was undertaken when they had been discharged from hospital. Most clients stated that the supervisor will undertake a 3 monthly review of the services being provided to see if more help is needed. In addition to this most people said that they would be happy to call the Homecare Supervisor if they had any problems or felt that they required additional services.

### **Future Service Developments, Service Improvements**

The types of future service developments that people suggested included;

- Clients helped out of bed earlier in the morning
- Later tuck in service
- More housework such as hoovering, dusting, put a washing on and cleaning
- Broader range of meal provision, not just preparing microwave meals
- Minor errands such as collecting a prescription
- Some flexibility in the service – possibly undertake the types of tasks people would do in their own homes such as change a light bulb for instance
- Carers given more time in each persons house – at the moment they are quite rushed.
- More information on Homecare Services
- Less changes to Homecare staff rotas
- Clients would like to get the same carers all the time

## **2.3 Focus Group with Carers**

### **Types of Services Received**

All of the carers involved in the focus group stated that the Homecare services provided consisted of practical help with regard to personal care including bathing and dressing. This can range from once a day to several times per day depending on the needs of the service user. In addition to this some people had their meals prepared for them.

Comment was made regarding meal preparation. The group stated that there is no choice with regard to meal preparation, the person has to have the prepared microwave meals. The opportunity to have a home made meal is not there. The choice is being taken from these people. Meal preparation will not do mince and potatoes for instance, or a scrambled egg or a plate of home made soup to be heated up, it is solely the microwaving of a frozen meal. Members of the focus group stated that frozen foods are fine for a while but they would not like to live on them 7 days a week.

There are no home help type services such as dusting or hovering provided. Most people stated that they would like help with housework but they do not get it.

A common view was that less and less being provided by the homecare service and more and more being put onto the family carer.

### **How did they become aware of the services available**

Most people said that they became aware of the Homecare services either because of a hospital admission and before the discharge people would be informed about the homecare team.

Alternatively, they became aware of the service because of some form of crisis. Most people stated that there is not a lot of information available out there on Homecare services.

It was stated that in the past there was an over 75's health check up by a health visitor. The health visitor would come in and check that everything was alright. During this visit they would notice the state of the house, see if the person was clean or losing weight. Through this method people would be identified as requiring additional support. Now this does not happen and many more people who may benefit from homecare are falling through the net.

### **Benefits and Dislikes of the Homecare Service**

All of the focus group said that the services provided by Homecare are very useful. They said that it takes a weight off the shoulders of the family carers. For instance one person said that the Homecarer can dress and wash his wife in one hour and it takes him two hours on the weekend mornings when the service is not provided. Everyone said that they get useful and relevant services, people do not receive services that they do not need.

The quality of the Homecare service is generally thought to be very high. In the past, when the homecare service progressed from the domestic side a few years ago to the more personal care service there were issues. For instance the person providing the service could have been the school cleaner one day, the lollypop lady the next and the next day they were in giving someone a bath. This is no longer the case and homecarers now have an induction course on lifting and handling and are going to have to be registered and will be working towards an NVQ in the future.

An issue that was raised is that in some rural areas where Homecare does not have a lot of staff they will purchase staff from outside agencies and some of these leave a lot to be desired. Sometimes they don't appear and often they don't even know the name of the person they are going to support. This will obviously affect the quality of service provided.

Members of the focus groups are generally very positive about the service provided. Time keeping can be an issue, however, most of the time they come when they are supposed to come. "You have to give leeway for about 5 or 10 minutes earlier or later". There are some occasions when the homecarer doesn't show up but this does not seem to be too often.

Issues that were raised included that of being put to bed quite early. For some people this can be 7.30pm. Another issue raised was that they don't always get the same homecarer to provide the service. A big concern for families is the continuity of home carers. It can be problematic for clients with dementia or parkinsons.

### Client Input and Service review

The general view is that reviews and assessment of service doesn't normally happen until there is a problem. If there is a crisis then there is an escalation of service. If all is well and people are not shouting out for additional help then you are assumed to be coping and are alright.

It was stated that there are some homecare supervisors that are very sensitive and will come in and listen and there are others that will come in and dictate what is going to happen. More often than not the homecare clients have very little say in what is being provided. Generally what happens is that a package is suggested to the client and that is what is provided. There is a view that the homecare provision is service lead and not needs lead. The client receives what the service can provide.

People said that families are constantly told there are budget restrictions to the service that can be provided. The families are made to feel guilty about asking for additional service, there is someone else who needs the service more than them.

### **Future service requirements and improvements**

Overall, people are pleased with the type and level of service provided. They do however, have a variety of suggestions which could help improve the service provided. Firstly, they would like the Homecare staff to be able to use a bit of common sense to do the types of things people would do in their own homes such as change a light bulb without the requirement for an electrician or a joiner or a plumber. By not doing this, they feel it makes the service look stupid.

In addition to this they feel that there should be an increased emphasis on the domestic side such as changing a light bulb, washing windows, empty the bin, hovering and dusting. They would also like the homecare staff to be able to have a slightly broader remit with regard to meal preparation. They would like them to be able to heat a tin of soup or make scrambled eggs for instance.

Members of the focus groups would also like homecare staff to have more training in dealing with elderly people and understanding the conditions they may have. This may include more training for homecare staff on issues to do with confidentiality and dignity and also providing more specialist services such as those required by people with Alzheimers, Dementia or Parkinsons.

## **Appendices**

### **Open Ended Responses**

### **Example Questionnaire**

**ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL  
SERVICE USER CONSULTATION  
HOME CARE SERVICES**

**Q9 – What tasks, if any do you think your Home Carers could do that they are not doing at present.**

Better timing over a weekend. When changing from one carer to the next, not enough communication as patient is unable to explain what is required and she has problems with hearing aids

The answers with a stroke means I don't need them

Light cooking (fry and egg)

Housework, as I am disabled and family have to do it

As a visually impaired client I would like cupboards cleaned and more cleaning regarding ceilings etc

Simple housework – dusting etc, kitchen floor wash weekly. Not sure what to request – legally.

Have a private arrangement for weekly hoovering

Cooking

Very satisfied with what they do at the moment

Wishes more time for laundry, has difficulty turning washing machine dials and cannot hang up washing

Listening to advice

Help with washing up

Do all I need at present

OK for now

I could do with help with ironing, my wrist is finding it increasingly difficult to hold the iron

Up to date they have done everything that has been asked of them

Completely satisfied with service

I always find them very caring and obliging

We are satisfied with all care and help we receive

What they do for me is fine

Been told home care assists is only doing personal care now. Have to find private home help in house as I am not able due to my age and blindness

Quite satisfied

Maybe a little more house work

I pay for cleaning and very satisfied

Everything I need is done

I am very pleased with my home carer

Little more time when being dressed and can odd errand be done

I could not wish for a better carer

I have a private cleaner

Hoovering etc, which I pay somebody to come in and do and ironing

Be reliable, they have to find own cover if going on holiday, which is difficult to do and I sometimes get no care

All needs cared for

More housework

None

If I had been in bed for a short time, the ladies made sure I had a drink at the side of the bed

Relief staff could do more, weekend staff different and don't spend same time

The home carers do all tasks I ask of them

Perhaps someone who can shave me at least twice a week

As private care for cleaning, laundry, shopping and banking etc

Happy at present with service

Everything is all right at present

None at present

I would like them to be able to cook fish, bacon, egg etc. They are only allowed to reheat food cooked by my niece. Would them at the top like microwave food?

Get me up earlier in the mornings

Laundry – I am unable to stand without the aid of a frame due to Parkinson's and a stroke

Nothing at present

Satisfied with tasks they are doing

I am very pleased with my care

Using their initiative and doing things that would help without being told e.g. taking rubbish out to the bin etc

My carer does all the tasks I need, which is merely to supervise showering in case I have a fall following on from a previous fall while I was ill

Pleased with everything

Shaving as part of morning routine

Would be helpful if carers could change light bulbs

They are good

Help with laundry would be beneficial

Foot care – last carer helped me with this, current carers don't

Assist in keeping kitchen and bathroom clean and tidy

Make up bed as this can be very difficult as I live alone. Changing sheets and duvet covers is hard on your own

Messages, shopping and post letters

The main home carer is excellent – some of the cover carers are not as thorough – meal layout and checking on my fluid intake

Cleaning, cooking

Shopping and laundry

They meet my needs

The regular ones make up my bed and would like all carers to do this for me

Wash dishes would be lovely

We are pleased with the home carers and are satisfied with what they do

There are a few carers off sick at present, more carers are needed

I get private girls to shift chairs and furniture for hoovering, cleaning etc

No change meantime

Ironing and defrost freezer

I would like a bath once a week, as my carer has no time to give me one

I had 4 carers when I got out of hospital but now I have one on Tuesday morning to give me a shower and my hair washed

Please check that my mother has taken daily medication (she may be becoming more forgetful)

No new tasks required meantime  
 They will do a task if they can  
 I am happy meantime with the help I am getting  
 Not at the moment  
 Wipe down shower afterwards and put wet towels in laundry  
 Being disabled and unable to walk makes life very difficult living alone. It would be helpful if help was given to doctors, opticians and dentists, as there is no service for taking one anywhere in a wheelchair  
 Cook a small meal e.g. bacon and eggs (not frozen) and do some cleaning  
 I am now living in sheltered accommodation with home care so my needs are well catered for  
 Happy enough  
 Help to change bed linen  
 Bed making, changing the sheets on a regular basis  
 Learn to make a bed  
 Could be more flexible with regard to the restrictions placed on them i.e. unable to cook certain foods  
 I am completely satisfied with the amount of time the service given to me. I understand the budget has to be spread out in Aberdeenshire to give everyone a service is difficult  
 Nothing more required meantime  
 Help with housework, laundry and shopping

**Q12 – What changes would you make to your Home Care Service which would improve your quality of life**

Satisfied with care level received  
 With loss of memory I would like regular times, so I don't get more confused  
 No, quite happy with the services at present  
 Carers able to take more time when visiting  
 To be given more home care time for other services  
 Having the same carer every time (if possible)  
 No change needed  
 Keep continuity of care, with familiar faces as often new faces can confuse and they don't always understand my needs  
 Later bedding times  
 Housework done as I have no family of my own and my sister has to do it and she is nearly 60 and has her own family  
 Cover used more to access services outside of home  
 Nothing at the moment  
 More visits  
 I feel more freedom for carers to do small tasks that would be useful to client within time allotted.  
 Client does not feel at ease to request this regarding roles etc  
 None, I am very happy that I have a carer to push me in and out of the shower and helps me with dressing once a week  
 More flexibility  
 No change at the moment  
 Nothing at the moment

More time for laundry, doesn't like asking neighbour too often  
 Less talking about their work when attending client  
 The ability to enter or leave my house  
 Some mornings too early (6.45am)  
 Not fit to take part in many activities as my health is not good  
 I think the service we get is very good  
 Regarding carer – I could not wish for a better one she is just a gem. Please do not change my carer as mentioned in November  
 Nothing just now  
 Having a shower  
 None at present  
 Very satisfied as things stand  
 None that I know of  
 Would like to know in advance of any alterations to the rota and changes of carers etc  
 A little more help as we are both over 80 and both disabled  
 I am satisfied with present care  
 None at the moment  
 No change  
 More visits from home carer  
 Little more time for conversation/company  
 None  
 None  
 None, happy with all things  
 I would like the return of my carer taking me out for fly cups/dinner, it was nice meeting other staff  
 For office staff – supervisors to find cover when carers are off and not leave it to carers themselves, as it is ridiculous having to find own cover  
 None  
 No changes  
 Stop microwave meals and go back to home cooked meals  
 If they have a heavy case load, but I am very grateful for the time they can spare  
 Practical assistance around the house would be most welcome i.e. cleaning, hoovering, tidying etc  
 Nothing with my usual main carer as she does more than English and can go out of her way to help you  
 None at the moment  
 Too much time spent in bed  
 None, I am very satisfied  
 Ideally the home care service should have stand-by staff as they do seem to be working under pressure for the numbers they have to care for  
 Cooking fresh meals, cleaning, housework  
 Happy at present  
 Knowing for definite that a home carer will turn up and preferably having the same carer or them not being changed all the time  
 I'd like to know if my carer is on holiday who I would be getting and if they would be at the same time every day instead of different times  
 I no longer receive home care, but when I did I was most impressed

Training for carers in blind awareness

Carer to have time to cook easy dishes as eating reheated food everyday is not good for anyone.

Them that sit at the top and make the rules have no practical experience

More flexibility with what carers are allowed to do to help

Get me up a bit earlier in the mornings

When the main carer is off duty, I never know who will cover as there is a shortage of carers.

Sometimes two appear to do the same job and at other times nobody appears

Nothing at present

Nothing at the moment

I am pleased with the care I receive

Less officials popping in and out. I know that checks are necessary but a few less please

Have more carers that care and are doing the job because they are interested in and enjoy working with elderly people, which some carers are but unfortunately an increasing number are not

More time allowed for communication

Perhaps if they could stay longer than 15 minutes when giving evening pills

Would like more help with housework and laundry

A little domestic help

More carers to facilitate arrangements for holiday cover etc

Nothing at present

There are so many things carers are not allowed to do. The answer is difficult to give

In future I may request further help for example if I order prepared food from a typical supplier I many need help with the microwave

Cannot think of one or praise them enough. The Care manager and each and every one of the carers

At the moment my wife is my main carer, if I did not have this help I would require more assistance from home care service

If all carers could meet the high standard of integrity set by main carer

Half hour start in mornings

They could help me with making and changing my bed

Contact (phone) with home help in case of needing support

Same carer on a regular basis

The service has been excellent, helping me home from and to stay in my own home. I understand why they can't spend more time at each visit but if they did it would be perfect

Satisfied

I am quite satisfied at the moment but I would contact the care manager if I required further assistance

If I could be transferred to a more comfortable chair for a while in the afternoon

To be able to be taken out sometimes, I would pay for petrol

Would feel safer having a community alarm

Perhaps 7 days a week instead of 5 at present

A bath once a week

I do not receive home care service

We would like to know the carers better to help improve communications to benefit both sides

Could carer please check that my mother has always taken her medication and record any changes in her generally

Requires (at present) very little assistance. The service he receives is adequate  
 Happy with service meantime  
 Knowing carer will come at specific time or communications when they are running late  
 Going to the sheltered housing service that was provided at its inception  
 I am very satisfied with my carer and how she helps me  
 Occasional help with shopping  
 Better access to respite care at short notice  
 More time per visit, especially at weekends  
 To have carer here for one hour per week, carer always in a rush to get on to next job, needs longer nowadays to give bath  
 Happy just now  
 I believed that the traditional role of a carer was to assist me with the daily tasks of cleaning, Hoovering etc to improve my daily quality of life in jobs I feel I can no longer do properly due to my health i.e. ageing  
 Help with changing bed linen and laundry  
 Nothing meantime  
 The home care service being staffed sufficiently to provide weekend cover as well as Monday to Friday cover. At the moment my spouse has to work all weekend looking after me with the help of one person from an outside agency  
 Good communications between Aberdeenshire Council social work department and it's clients who are receiving the service. This is not happening. Clients have to depend on the carers for news about the service and what changes are happening  
 I feel that the carers are over stretched. Hurried visits are not ideal if one is under the weather.  
 Not enough interest shown by areas in health of client  
 To spend a little more time with me. Not just in and out in about 5 minutes  
 Having someone available to help me on to the commode at times

**Q14 – Do you have any other comments you would like to make.**

Home care – very satisfied with supervisor  
 Lowland Market Research costs  
 I am very pleased with carer  
 Never know what carer I am going to have at weekends. Would like to be on a rota, so I know who it is  
 Without the help of the carers and my daughter in law I wouldn't manage to stay in my own home. I appreciate all the help I am given  
 I am not looking forward to the changes that are about to happen – different carers are not a good thing when you are old  
 It is good to have regular carers most of the time  
 Unable to answer some questions as care provided is minimal  
 At the moment I just need help with a shower but there was a time when I had help three times a day and found all the carers very pleasant and willing to help  
 Meetings should be arranged locally. I am disabled and cannot travel long distances on a bus. I have a walker for outdoors  
 Hope there are no changes in the future, if there are changes. Please inform before changes are decided. Unable to go to any meetings as trouble walking

On a date late August 2007 home care supervisor and OT said a walk in shower could be provided. Care and repair arranged September 2007 – a visit and this took place. Every thing was to go ahead. So far October 2008 nothing has been done. Seemingly plumber is the problem It would be helpful if a contact number was available at weekends, for example if a carer failed to turn up (this has happened to me twice)

Care is ongoing – housework and shopping is a separate issue done privately

I think cleaning/hovering should be included

We are very grateful for the help given

Pleased with the service, carers are all very willing to help

More than pleased with care. I would be very disappointed with any change, as being blind I do not like changes

Too much work put on carers when other carers are off sick

More help with preparing and serving food. It is not my wish or my husbands to have Wiltshire meals

I look after my husband every day, he gets dome care once a week

I am more than satisfied with every aspect of the home care service. It has changed my life

I have no complaints at all and got all the help I needed

Would like the same carers to come regularly

Very happy with present care, at 94 years of age I would not welcome any change

Not really, I have an excellent carer and when she is unavailable the other carers who come are very good and kind

Family for shopping, bank, post office, doctors etc

As my mother is now 94 I feel she could benefit from additional visits and help from carer, especially supervising meals

In the future I would like to be assessed by OT's with regard to equipment available to enable me to remain in my own home

Service very good

More co-operation between Aberdeen's Council and home carers

It would be very helpful to me if home carers could check and bleach my toilet and hand basin

I am really pleased with the care I receive

Is it not possible to have carers prepare meals other than frozen meals

I am very pleased with my care and also my carer

Most of the things in this survey I get a private person to do them as I am not entitled to anything except a shower once a week

My mother lives alone and is a diabetic. She went without food and medication before I found out (daughter)

Wanting to stay at home. I would have appreciated if I'd got a list of all the things the carer was allowed to do

The Homecare supervisor's lack of communication regarding security number when new carers come on board and her habit of making staff shortages the problem of the family concerned instead of finding her own solution first

Very happy with carers

Some evenings I have to struggle to cook a meal or my family comes round with a cooked meal

This care is enabling me to stay for 2 months with my daughter for respite care

I thank you all for the help and taxi card, so once a week I can have my hair done

The home care service is very much appreciated and we look forward in continuing to receive the care

Owing to terminal illness would I get more care as my condition deteriorated?

I am very happy with the carer I have and I don't want a change

Very pleased with the care that my home carers provide

Very satisfactory service

As I am in my eighties and my next of kin lives a distance away, I would like to think my carer would contact my doctor or granddaughter if I am not able to do so. This would not be any breach of privacy of mine

Yes, I understand carers are paid by the minute, surely they should be paid by the hour

I think that their should be better co-ordination with the person in need and the one's in overall charge

I would be interested in community alarm

I'd like to see the home care supervisor or the home care manager as I have not seen any of them in years

Nurses from Byndand health centre showed great care and kindness

Informed when a different carer is scheduled to attend

My niece has heard that carers won't be able to do any housework soon, as a person on their own needs all the help like home helps used to do

I am delighted with the carers

Since the new rotas have started, I don't know who is coming in when it is the main carer's days off. I feel that the home care supervisor in this area is a hard, unfeeling person

No complaints at the moment, quite satisfied

Carers carry work out to meet the expected outcomes, satisfactorily

Why keep changing the rota. I am just getting accustomed to my carer then they are changed

It is nice to have continuity with the same carer

I think the questions are about a service that is about to change. Why change what is working well

The demands and general requirement of out day to day needs cannot be quantified in a predictable timescale – needs become progressively more complicated

I think I am very luck with the help I get

This enquiry – who is or are the home carers, difficult to answer such vague questions

Yes, the standard of care offered by different carers is immense and the turnover of carers is so high that it makes continuity of care almost impossible considering lack of communication between them

Since coming to Aberdeenshire in October 2007 I have found the care service to be outstanding, friendly, caring and helpful to myself and my husband

None, just happy to stay in my own home

Very pleased with help

Would prefer it if same carer was left on regular basis. There are too many changes and sometimes unsure who is coming in

In general the service is good in that it allows me to stay in my own home – alongside support from my family

I am so grateful for all the help and care I have had these past years from the home care service.

Long may it continue

I am grateful for the care you give me

Having the same person continuously except for the odd day i.e. holidays  
 Does doing the laundry come under home care assistance  
 Overall the carer's provide a very useful service and are very caring. This service is very much appreciated  
 Service of care sufficient at present, but my circumstances could change and more care needed in the future  
 Rather than individual email accounts for the home care supervisor, would recommend a post email address accessible by any home care supervisor to provide changes of service, holiday dates etc. Currently it doesn't work because there is no consistency of staffing using personal email addresses. However, apart from the above comment I am satisfied with the service I receive  
 Training and numbers of carers should be a priority for council  
 It has been a wonderful service, the carers are all very nice and professional  
 Up till present day I am able to do most things for myself like shop, clean, cook, wash and iron. I think I should take a course in writing  
 I am happy with my regular carers and hope they continue to be with me  
 I like all carers, but time is restricted  
 Overall very happy with service  
 Meals on wheels should never have been stopped in Aberdeenshire, lots of voluntary help been wasted  
 The carers do not do housework. I pay for a girl to come in once day a week  
 I am most satisfied  
 I have always had very good care from all the carers attending to my needs but since I am much better I can manage on my own. I get a check call every night and one morning for shower  
 Carers are very busy and have no time to chat or have coffee due to workload  
 Carer has stopped writing comments on the personal planning communications sheets (PPCS).  
 We are not sure what the carers duty is in relation to the completion of this sheet e.g. clearly it would be better if any change in my mother was recorded  
 Our observation is that the carers are always rushed, as there are not enough of them  
 We are very satisfied  
 Mum sometimes hangs around in her dressing gown for over an hour waiting for carer to arrive to help her with the shower  
 My carer is a first class person, in all respects  
 The help I receive makes it possible to live on my own. I have no family and very few friends, who are also my age so the carers help me keep in touch with the world  
 Very happy  
 An hour a week for bath and to change bed linen, at present sufficient but his should be revised every six months as client is getting less and less able  
 Care given to date has been excellent. Would like to know what other help can be given  
 Hardly anyone can make a bed properly  
 The level of care and professionalism is superior to that of any of the private companies, during the past 3 years. Our only wish is that weekend cover could be provided too  
 I am worried about the changes due to take place within the home care service. Why is there need for changes when the service is working perfectly. Why are the clients always the last to know about changes. There is certainly bad communications between Aberdeenshire Council social work and their clients

The medication sheet is a waste of time. All that is recorded is date, time medication given, yes/no if client took it and a signature of carer. No details at all about type of amount of medication given. I feel that the sheet is irrelevant

Everything very satisfactory for needs at the moment

Unable to attend the proposed meeting but would appreciate discussion regarding question 9

I would like to be taken shopping and I have a wheelchair

Carers do a good job, however they do so without support and backups from their supervisor