Thurrock Coalition

Safety Solutions:
Workshop Report
10th December 2013

Introduction

Thurrock Coalition offers advice and support for disabled and older residents of Thurrock and their carers. We are a wide network of individuals and groups aiming to inform people about their rights and entitlements and to improve the quality and choice of services that might assist them.

Context

The *"Safety Solutions"* Event was held in order to engage Citizens of Thurrock, carers and families and Council Officers to discuss the results of the Personal Social Services (PSS) annual survey – specifically in relation to how safe people who use Adult Social Care feel in Thurrock.

The format of the event was based around small breakout groups – each of which was asked to think about "feeling safe in Thurrock", to address the following issues and to feedback to the main group:

Who makes me feel less safe?
What makes me feel less safe?
Why do I feel less safe?
Where and when do I feel less safe?

The groups were then asked to discuss what could be done to improve feelings of safety in the borough.

Recommendations and Next Steps

- The workshop engaged 8 people, of a varied demographic each of whom provided a valuable insight into feelings of safety in their lived experiences (see below).

- The findings of the workshop (see below) should be used to develop and implement solutions (for both Adult Social Care and the Community Safety Partnership) to increase feelings of safety in Thurrock.
- It is envisaged that the workshop will be replicated in early 2014, to involve a wider audience, through inclusion and consultation alongside individuals who use day opportunities across Thurrock. Thurrock Coalition will liaise with Partners to organise and deliver outreach-based workshops to further inform the exercise.

"Safety Solutions"- Background and Aims of the day

- In February 2013 Thurrock Council sent a survey regarding the social care and support to each individual who receives from Adult Social Care in Thurrock.

- After reviewing all results received, Thurrock Council found that feelings of safety have declined. Subsequently Thurrock Council wanted to understand what could be done to improve feelings of safety.

- To this end, Thurrock Council engaged Thurrock Coalition to facilitate a workshop aimed at individuals who receive/have received a service from Adult Social Care (ASC) and who indicated on the PSS Survey that their feeling of safety in Thurrock has declined (a 2.1% decrease in the proportion of people who use services who feel safe compared to the previous year).

- During the workshop individuals were asked to think about what kinds of things make them feel less safe at the moment and what things they would like to happen that would make them feel safer. (either in the home or outside . The workshop included small "Breakout group" discussions with community members, older people and carers.

Findings

Below is a summary of the findings from the workshop, followed by suggested actions to improve feelings of safety in Thurrock.

(Note: the verbatim feedback appears in the appendices of this report).

Who makes me feel less safe? (Inside the home)

Participants felt that the national news plays a role in making people feel less safe, particularly when reporting crime levels. However, the local news (specifically Thurrock & Essex) is more reassuring and provides more information about Thurrock.

There was much discussion around bogus/cold callers/strangers knocking at peoples' doors, making individuals feel particularly vulnerable in their own homes. Furthermore people also felt less safe at home when they receive cold calls and nuisance sales calls on their home number (even if ex-directory) and even more so if these calls were received on mobile phones, as these were seen as more "personal". Participants were especially concerned about the motivation behind these calls and raised the question as to whether the calls were made in order to find out whether the person's house was empty or occupied at a given time.

The issue of noisy or antisocial neighbours was discussed. People highlighted that not knowing their neighbours and the resulting lack of community spirit meant that they often felt intimidated when faced with antisocial behaviour, such as loud music, and therefore less able to speak to and/or challenge the individuals to resolve any such issues.

Who makes me feel less safe? (Outside the home)

Workshop participants discussed the issue of a lack of police visibility in their communities. This includes both PCSO and officer patrols. The community value of the PCSOs was also raised.

Feedback highlighted perceptions around groups of both youths/adults in the street. There is a perception that they are intimidating, particularly if blocking pavements or shop entrances/exits. However, it was recognised that not all such groups are rude and anti-social, some are polite and will happily make way if asked.

One group felt that sometimes hearing people speaking different languages can be isolating, they felt that people may be talking/laughing about them and that cultural differences could make people feel more vulnerable as integration is perceived as more difficult.

One observation was made around the view that generally people seem more aggressive in the winter than summer time.

Dog owners were also raised as a concern for people, particularly in relation to roaming dogs, without collars or owners controlling them, as well as owners who do not clean up after their dogs. In addition, foxes and rats were discussed as detracting from the positive feel of an area, and that more could be done to address these concerns.

Careless drivers were also discussed, making people feel unsafe when using footpaths and zebra crossings, this includes when drivers park their cars on paths, causing obstructions, meaning that people have to walk on grass areas, where there is a risk of dog mess or causing people to step out into and walk in the road.

Pot holes on paths and roads were raised as an issue, particularly in Tilbury. Individuals reported that when they have spoken to the Council, they were told that pot holes have to be 1 ½" deep, otherwise the Council will not fix it.

What makes me feel less safe? (Inside the home)

Participants discussed the importance of fire alarms and other assistive technology in their homes, and were re-assured by it. However, people expressed concern over not knowing who looks after/maintains these, who is responsible, and the difference between provision for council and private tenants.

People expressed a need to have/know where to find information about ways of keeping safe at home.

Several participants discussed being worried about putting the latch on the front door of their property at night, for several reasons – a) No one can get in if you need help but (b) People do not feel safe if they don't use the latch.

What makes me feel less safe? (Outside the home)

The groups stated that seeing empty properties (voids) in their communities made them feel less safe, as they were often not well lit and in states of disrepair. The view was taken that such voids also affect the feeling of community spirit and cohesion

Participants also felt that cyclists on paths and people leaving bikes on pavements affected their feelings of safety and that this also applied to people using motorised/electric "shop mobility" style scooters.

Why do I feel less safe? (Inside the home)

A major issue that was voiced by all groups was the lack of adequate porch/patio lighting for social housing, leaving people to feel particularly vulnerable when leaving the house or returning home, this was especially marked during the darker winter months.

Similarly people expressed concern over the lack of provision of safety measures for vulnerable social housing tenants i.e. PIR lighting/fencing etc.

Participants overwhelmingly stated that isolation within local communities is a barrier to getting out and about and socialising more. It was felt that with fewer people knowing their neighbours, they in turn felt less safe at home if anything happens, (e.g. if they were to fall and suffer an injury etc).

Why do I feel less safe? (Outside the home)

An issue that was voiced by all groups was the lack Inadequate or lack of street lighting in town/urban areas, leading people to feel less safe.

Several general observations included the recognition of limited support for disabled/ wheelchair-users and vulnerable people with mobility difficulties on train and bus stations at night (security staff only). The groups felt that having fewer staff, leaving unmanned stations increases vulnerability and in turn reduces feelings of safety. Feedback also showed that buses are not perceived as safe at night and there is a lack of faith in an effective driver response to any incidents/anti-social/threating behaviour, should it arise.

Where and when do I feel less safe? (Inside the home)

The groups said that they felt less safe both at home and outside, during hours of darkness (including night time and winter months). One attendee said that they even feel less safe in their garden, during both day and night.

A recurring issue was that of a lack of community spirit, in effect leading to perceptions of isolation and reduced safety, in communities where people have limited or no opportunities to create, build and maintain social networks.

Participants were also of the view that there is too much emphasis on things/forms/services from the Council being available on the Internet and that many older people (including participants at the workshop) aren't interested/don't have access to computers or the Internet. Consequently, concerns were raised that there may be instances in which vulnerable people do not know where to go for information if they need help both in their homes and in the wider community.

Where and when do I feel less safe? (Outside the home)

Interestingly, participants said that Grays town centre did not feel safe (either during the day or night). This was due to several factors, including: large crowds of people, groups of people visibly consuming alcohol. Previous experience of theft of personal belongings (albeit in a different borough), the feelings had endured, leaving the individual to feel nervous.

Some participants also felt that their communities would increasing start to feel less safe with the impact of the traffic to the new docks, which, it was discussed, could increase traffic incidents, dangers to pedestrians and crime levels.

What could be done to improve feelings of safety in the borough

All participants were then asked to think positively about what could be done to make people and communities feel more safe in Thurrock, the following were suggested:

Being supported to know what's available in the community and being supported to get there (via transport). This would then enable people to feel part of the local community and would thus increase levels of community awareness

Increasing the visibility of CCTV, ensuring that it is used correctly and is operational (i.e. has film in it).

Increasing the visibility of PCSOs, Police Officers, to act as a re-assuring element and to have more local area co-ordinators (LACs) for help/information

Encouraging wider community involvement i.e. providing and supporting more awareness of community forums/neighbourhood watch scheme. Encouraging publicity and awareness of the availability and use of telecare and other similar/associated assistive technologies.

Increasing the offer of local authority provision of safety measures for vulnerable tenants and for privately housed residents i.e. lighting/fencing/safety chains/CCTV etc.

Conclusion

The "Safety Solutions" Event was held in order to engage Citizens of Thurrock, carers and families and Council Officers to discuss the results of the Personal Social Services (PSS) annual survey – specifically in relation to how safe people who use Adult Social Care feel in Thurrock. The Groups were asked to discuss:

a) Who makes me feel less safe?

b) What makes me feel less safe?

c) Why do I feel less safe?

d) Where and when do I feel less safe?

The groups were then asked to discuss what could be done to improve feelings of safety in the borough. The verbatim feedback obtained from each of the Breakout Groups, which includes discussion and suggestions is reproduced in the Appendices of this report.

It is hoped that the feedback detailed in this report will be used to develop and implement solutions (for both Adult Social Care and the Community Safety Partnership) to increase feelings of safety in Thurrock. It is envisaged that the workshop will be replicated in early 2014, to involve a wider audience, through inclusion and consultation alongside individuals who use Adult Social Care across Thurrock. Thurrock Coalition will liaise with Partners to organise and deliver these outreach-based workshops to further inform the exercise.

Verbatim feedback from the "Safety Solutions" Breakout Groups

Topic	Feedback (Inside the Home)	Feedback (Outside the Home)
Who makes you feel less safe?	• The National News can make us feel less safe, particularly when reporting crime levels. Local news (Thurrock & Essex) is more reassuring and provides more information about Thurrock. • Bogus callers/ Strangers/cold callers • Sales calls on mobile phones and home number. Are they calling to see if house is empty • Noisy or antisocial neighbours – intimidation • Not knowing neighbours/lack of community • Negative press/TV news and information regarding immigration and asylum	• Lack of police being seen/less visible policing – PCSOs and officers/patrols • Groups of both youths/adults - Groups of people in the street – there is a perception that they are intimidating hang around shops etc. – are rude and anti-social. But not all groups are rude. Some are polite. • People seem more aggressive in the winter than summer time. • Hearing people speaking different languages can be isolating. It can feel like people may be talking/laughing about you. Cultural differences can make people feel more vulnerable as integration is perceived as more difficult • Roaming dogs – no collars or people with them • People who do not clean up after their dogs • Careless drivers

		• Cars on path – meaning that people have to walk on grass with dog mess or we have to walk in the road
		• Pot holes on path and roads – Tilbury. We've been told that the pot hole has to be 1 ½" deep, otherwise council won't fix it
		• Foxes
What makes you feel less safe?	• Fire alarms – not knowing who looks after/maintains these? (Who is responsible?) Council/Private Tenants? • Not having the information • Worried about putting the latch on door at night – as no one can get in if you need help, but don't feel safe if I don't use it	• Empty properties • Cyclists on paths and leaving their bikes on pavements • Motorised scooters – older people
Why do you feel less safe?	• Inadequate or lack of porch/patio lighting for social housing • No provision of safety measures for vulnerable social housing tenants i.e. PIR lighting/fencing etc. • Isolation in local community is a barrier – not	• Inadequate or lack of street lighting • Limited support for disabled/ wheelchair users on stations at night (security staff only) – stations unmanned so increases vulnerability. • Buses are not perceived as safe at night

	knowing neighbours, so feel less safe at home if anything happens, (e.g. fall etc).	because of a perception of greater level of anti-social behaviour and lack of faith in adequate driver response
Where & When do you feel less safe?	• Home, community – Day, night • Feel less safe in my garden both day and night • No community spirit • There is too much emphasis on things/forms/services from the Council being available on the internet. Many older people aren't interested/don't have access to computers or the internet. • Not knowing where to go for information if you need help both in home and community – without going on the internet	• Grays town centre – both day and night • Crowds with alcohol • Bag/purse being stolen (lived experience of this occurring) • Feel nervous • Traffic to the new docks – could increase dangers, traffic and crime

Suggested Actions – What would make people feel safer in Thurrock
• Feeling part of local community/community awareness

- More CCTV if it is <u>used</u> and has <u>film</u> etc.

- Visible policing and more local area co-ordinators (LACs) for help/information

- Other community involvement i.e. more awareness of community forums/neighbourhood watch etc.

- Wider publicity and awareness of the use of telecare

- Local authority provision of safety measures for vulnerable tenants and for privately housed residents i.e. lighting/fencing/safety chains/CCTV etc.