

CARERS HUB PROJECT SUMMARY REPORT 2014 to 2019

The purpose of this longitudinal study was to explore the impact of the 16 Carer Support Hubs that were opened within Hertfordshire over a 5-year period, the project being funded by the Big Lottery. Each Hub is facilitated by volunteers who are more usually carers themselves or those who have experienced being in a caring role but now bereaved. The volunteers are trained and supported by Carers in Hertfordshire.

The methodology used to conduct the study was mixed methods, utilising both qualitative and quantitative data. Baseline perception data was collected using Likert scale questions for all participants who attended the Hubs to explore how well supported they feel as a carer and how they rate the social aspects of their life. Participants were also asked how isolated they felt as well as how they rated their life as a carer, again using Likert scales allowing the data to be quantized and for statistical analysis to be conducted. Following a period of 3-6 month's attendance at the Hub, the questionnaire was re-administered to ascertain any changes in these perceptions.

In total, 664 sets of data have been collected from Hub attendees on their joining plus 284 sets of follow-up data from those who have attended a Hub for 3-6 months or longer. This represents 43% completed data sets available for comparison. This number of responses allows for a good degree of confidence in the findings and can be considered as representative of the whole group.

In addition, a total of 47 feedback forms were obtained from participants who have only attended a Hub on one occasion to explore the reasons for not returning as well as monitor their perceived levels of isolation, quality of life and social contact in the same timeframe.

Hub	Open since	Number of pre-attendance forms collected	Of which female	Of which male	Number of post-attendance forms collected
Watford	July 2014	91	66	25	42
Hemel Hempstead	October 2014	52	30	22	22
Stevenage	Nov 2014	85	60	25	37
Welwyn Garden City	January 2015	44	41	3	17
St Albans	August 2015	51	43	8	28
Bishop's Stortford	Nov 2015	65	51	14	29
Hoddesdon	January 2016	41	31	10	18
Letchworth	Sept 2016	48	36	12	24
Potters Bar	Nov 2016	47	37	10	14
Chorleywood	February 2017	43	39	4	24
Ware	June 2017	35	28	7	16
Buntingford	Nov 2017	10	5	5	5
Berkhamsted	February 2018	8	6	2	0
Borehamwood	June 2018	17	12	5	8
Harpenden	Nov 2018	19	18	1	0
Royston	February 2019	8	5	3	0
Total No. of forms		664	508	156	284

1.1 Table showing the number of completed forms for each Hub

The majority of the respondents (two thirds) have attended a Hub at least 5 times.

Perception Data

Table 1.2 below shows the mean scores including those collected from carers who only attended a Hub on one occasion. It can be seen from this table that the scores of those who attended a Hub on just one occasion are lower than those who have attended a Hub on more occasions for all aspects apart from – how well supported they feel.

Mean score for Hub Attendees	Pre Hub Attendance	3-6 Month Attendance	Difference +/-	One-time hub attendee mean scores
Quality of life rating	5.68	6.33	+ 0.65	5.88 (N = 42)
Social contact rating	5.92	6.62	+ 0.7	6.52 (N = 42)
How well supported carers feel	5.42	6.00	+ 0.58	6.42 (N = 43)
Isolation rating	5.50	6.49	+ 0.99	6.29 (N = 28)

Table 1.2 showing perception mean scores including one-time Hub attendees

A paired sample t-test was conducted on the whole data set to determine whether the increase in these perceptions from pre to post attendance is statistically significant i.e. whether the improvement found in all these aspects is likely to have occurred by chance.

The following facts were determined:

- There was found to be a **large effect size** (0.10) in **how isolated their caring role makes them feel.**
- There was found to be a **moderate to small effect size** (0.03) in **carers' satisfaction with the amount of social contact** they have.
- There was found to be a **moderate to small effect size** (0.03) in **how well supported carers feel** in their caring role.
- There was found to be a **moderate effect size** (0.06) in **carers' satisfaction with their quality of life** as a carer.

There was also found to be a small but positive correlation between the number of times attended and perceived quality of life (post attendance). In addition, a small but positive correlation was found between the times attended and perceived satisfaction with social contact. There was also a small positive correlation between the number of times attended and perceived feeling of isolation.

It should be noted that other influences or interventions could have contributed to these improvements and the findings cannot be attributed to Hub attendance alone. The calculations cannot determine conclusively that attending a hub more frequently resulted in the increased and improved perceptions but the qualitative data provided by the attendees would suggest that this is highly likely.

'Attending the hub has had a great influence – it is all so helpful.'

'It has given me something to look forward to.'

'It has given me assurance and community support and friendship.'

'It's been a great (and continues to be) a great help.'

Conclusion

It is clear from the quantitative data that there is strong evidence to suggest the social value of the Hubs in improving the quality of carers lives, in increasing the amount of social contact they have and in feeling better supported and less isolated. In ALL of these areas there was found to be a statistically significant improvement after 3-6 months of attending a Hub which was corroborated by the qualitative data. Much of the value appears to come from spending time with other carers but there are several comments on the service provided by Carers in Herts and their volunteers/staff.

'I'm so impressed with the emotional and practical help provided by all excellent staff'

'Advice signposting and help is always available – staff are empathetic and well trained. I now know how to get support for myself and my 'cared for' person and this gives me confidence and choice'

'I have had some very helpful information provided and been able to talk to carer staff about issues'

Overwhelmingly, positive comments outweigh any negatives ones and many of those who are asked to comment on more negative aspects that are least useful are unable to do so:

'The meeting was over too quickly.'

'Have not found (a least useful aspect) yet – possibly putting the biscuits too close to me.'

The stated benefits of attending are numerous although sharing experiences with other carers appears to be the strongest and extends beyond the meetings. There was also found to be a correlation between the frequency of attendance; the more participants attended a hub, the greater the positive impact.

'It has helped a great deal belonging to a group who are in the same situation. I feel more positive and it has helped me to be a confident carer.'

'I met some lovely people who I now meet outside of the group.'

'Meeting other people in same boat and finding out how they cope.'

Report written for Carers in Hertfordshire by Dr Jill Andeanoff www.jillandeanoffmcc.co.uk - full report available upon request.