



Proactive Press Release: PATIENT POWER

Approved by Chair for Distribution: Tuesday, 28 June 2011

Embargoed until : 00:00 4th July 2011

To be reported to Executive Board: July Session 2011

People all over the country have been appalled, recently, by stories and undercover filming then broadcast on national television showing poor care being delivered in NHS and Social Care settings. They have been equally concerned that the health and social care leaders, who are responsible for contracting for those services, often confess to knowing little about the consumer experience before the exposé aired.

Now, Mr Falah Al-Khafaji, a business man with interests in Nurseries has developed and launched a web-based system known as “Rate Our Services?”, which will allow all health and social care consumers to rate their service experiences, anonymously, at the touch of a button. It will then be much easier for health and social care providers to find out just how they are doing in the eyes of their users.

Pioneering patient activists, Mr Mick Ainsworth and Ms Hilary Brown, Board Members of Bury LINK, with their Board, has seized on this system as a means of gathering service user experiences on a much larger scale than anything that they have been involved with previously.

Mick said, “Much of the patient experience we hear of is often anecdotal in nature and we don’t know if it is an isolated incident, a blip in a good service a trend or perhaps a real problem. Service users very often fail to feedback positive experiences because they don’t have time or they think that nothing will happen as a result of their review, but I choose my holidays by reference to customer reviews why shouldn’t I use other patients’ reviews to choose my GP?”

He continued, “The Bury LINK have decided to promote this independent and un-moderated website as the means for Bury residents, through us, to tell health and social care providers and commissioners what their services really feel like on the ground.”

Falah said, “Unlike other systems which have been available and poorly used for some time, our system does not allow service providers or commissioners to edit the information prior to publication so these really are real people’s views to help you choose. What’s more our research has demonstrated time and time again that often

people do not complain or give their views openly because they fear repercussion from the service and as our system guarantees user anonymity we believe that the usage of the system will be high”.

The “Rate our Services?” system works by a service user logging on to the web-site and reviewing their experience by awarding service stars over a series of categories.

Mick continued, “I am really excited about the way that the questions were formulated because they have been created after consultation with over 400 people in Bury itself so it really is a system designed by service users for service users. This consultation led the site designers to concentrate on customer service questions rather than an assessment of clinical or professional care”.

Health and social care leaders in the Borough are also eager to see the system launched and to begin to extract performance data from it to help them plan services. Local Home Care Services Provider, Terry Bowman of Bluebird Care commented, “I can’t improve my service unless I know what my customers want and how they would like me to improve.”

Local GP, Dr Jerry Martin concluded, “We use patient surveying now but our current method takes much longer and is only available as a census once a year. I’m keen on “Rate our Services?”, because I can ask my patients to rate my practice after every consultation.”

At Bury PCT, as a PEC Chairman Dr Gerry Martin, carries responsibility for contracting for health care in the Borough and therefore continued, “I can see how Bury LINK can collate the data gathered on this site and use it to help us identify patient priorities and monitor aspects of the contracts we hold. It is an efficient way of gathering a large amount of views consistently and to be able to compare the performance of different services. A simple IT system like this is long overdue in this modern age”.

Falah said finally, “I hope that ultimately we’ll be able to take this system national and offer it to all the LINKs and that it will evolve with them. I hope we’ll be able to branch out into holding video and photographs too eventually to complement the text so that health and social care consumers can have at least as rich source a source of information available to them as when they go on line to research tradesmen, restaurants, hotels or even e-bay sellers’ trustworthiness.”

[ends]

Notes to Journalists

- The website is publically available, from 2.7.11 at www.burylink.org/Rat

- Press viewing is available
www.burylink.org/1ss_sample/doyou/rateourservices
- Mr Falah Al-Khafaji, is the owner of a Rate our Services Ltd
- Video, MP3 and photographs attached but remain copyright of Media4Cam limited
- Press enquiries via Vickie Butcher at Bury LINK. 0161 253 6300