

Brief practice example: Increasing young carer involvement in reviews/schools charter mark – Lewisham

Lewisham has a strong record of involving the carers of people with mental health problems in Care Programme Approach (CPA) meetings, at which the needs of the person experiencing mental illness are discussed and reviewed. Involvement in the 'Think child, think parent, think family' project, however, highlighted that the views of young carers about their parents' mental illness were not being heard. One obvious problem was that CPA reviews, like most meetings, were taking place during the school day, making it impossible for young carers to attend.

Lewisham therefore included shifting CPA reviews to 4pm in their action plan, so that if they wished to, young carers could come. There are benefits to both the young carer and to the family as a whole in including the young carer in discussions about a parent's mental illness, and in supporting the family as a whole to be resilient. Psychiatrists in one Community Mental Health Team decided to pilot a shift in their working practices to accommodate the change, agreeing also to hold meetings in convenient places for the family, such as their own home.

This initiative built on work by Carers Lewisham and Lewisham to promote awareness of young carers' needs in schools, by awarding a Charter mark to those schools who listen to, value, and support young carers.