Background

The need to evaluate service users’ experiences of care is well documented, both in healthcare generally (HSE, 2008; HIQA, 2012) and in palliative care specifically (NCPC, 2010). The validated Views of Informal Care’s Evaluation of Services (VOICES) tool has been employed in national surveys in the UK and in a recent Irish study.

Aims and Objectives:

To evaluate bereaved carers’ experiences of care provided by inpatient, community specialist palliative care services (SPCS) and bereavement services and to identify required areas for improvement.

Methods:

This mixed method, descriptive post-bereavement study gathered data retrospectively using a postal survey and focus group (8 participants) with bereaved relatives of patients. An adapted version of the VOICES, Short Form’ (VOICES-SCH) was utilised.

The sample included relatives who were bereaved no earlier than three months and no longer than 6 months.

Results:

1) 53% (n = 72) response rate to survey.

Conclusions/Recommendations

• Consideration should be given to developing processes to capture email addresses of next of kin.

• Processes to communicate with patients and families regarding end of life care preferences and advance care planning should be reviewed.

• Availability of hospice at home staff to respond to patient needs should be reviewed. Some respondents experienced visits as rushed or that the service was only available Monday to Thursday.

• Some families report they did not always understand information that was provided to them. This finding should be highlighted to health care staff and mechanisms to assure good communication skills should be reviewed.

• Review processes of offering bereavement information and follow up to assure consistency within the available resources.

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