

Grace Cassidy

- Hello my name is Grace Cassidy and I have been a member of Belfast Mental Health Rights Group since 2008. I am a carer for my son who is disabled after trying to take his own life.
- One of the biggest campaigns we have been involved in is making sure that people who leave A&E who still need mental health treatment, get a follow up appointment within 24 hours.
- I would just like to say that having an appointment card before you leave hospital was a very important issue for me and my family as my son was promised an urgent appointment after discharge and five years later we still haven't got it!

- **In 2010, the Minister for Health launched the Card Before You Leave appointment card scheme – this was our idea and it guaranteed that people would be linked into the system not lost in the system.**
- **Card Before You Leave is given to anyone leaving A&E who is low enough risk not to be admitted but still in need of a psycho-social assessment. It is also supposed to be given to anyone who leaves A&E without being treated.**
- **Since the Card Before You Leave scheme was introduced we have been trying to make sure that it is working properly on the ground. To do this we have been involved in the Board set up by the Health and Social Care Board to monitor how each Trust is implementing it.**

- **One of the biggest challenges we have found is that different Trusts are implementing Card Before You Leave in different ways – it shouldn't matter where you live or what A&E you go to, you should be able to expect a Card Before You Leave if you need one.**

- **We also found that it was really difficult to get proper information about how Card Before You Leave was working. For example, despite an evaluation of Card Before You Leave in 2012 highlighting that 160 people every month get the appointment card, the Trusts have not been able to give us basic information about how many people get the appointment card now.**

- **Having information from the Trusts about how Card Before You Leave is being implemented is really important because we are hearing stories on the ground of people not getting**

Card Before You Leave when they should be. In fact when we did surveys last March into people in mental health crisis' experiences at A&E, NO-ONE we spoke to had got a Card Before You Leave.

- **It's important that Card Before You Leave works properly at A&E because its essential that people in mental health crisis aren't left out of services – they need to be linked in and they need proper help quickly.**
- **It's also important that Card Before You Leave works properly at A&E because this scheme came directly from people like us. It was our idea and we fought for it be rolled out across Northern Ireland. The decisions that the government makes about healthcare at A&E must involve people who know the most about what's needed – service users and their carers.**

