



# COMPASS CARERS SUPPORT GROUP – ILCHESTER

**25/05/2017**

Healthwatch Somerset engaged with members of the carers support group who meet monthly at the GP Medical Centre in Ilchester. Healthwatch Somerset informed the group about the work and role of Healthwatch, and listened to their queries and concerns about the health and social care services that they use. We also introduced our survey on ‘How Connected are You?’.

# Compass Carers Support Group

## Healthwatch Somerset

Healthwatch is the official framework through which local people can have their say about health and social care services. Healthwatch works on behalf of the whole of the community - children, young people and adults and needs people to tell it what is going on in the health and social care services in their area. Healthwatch can tell services about patient experiences of care and hold them to account; it can also enter and view services such as care homes and hospitals, observe what is happening and report back to commissioners.

People can feel excluded from services and we know that access to services and treatment is not always equal to all, so Healthwatch also has a signposting function to navigate the health and social care system. Healthwatch Somerset is independent, transparent and accountable and powerful, with the strength of the law and the national influence of Healthwatch England behind it. Healthwatch Somerset is provided by The Care Forum.

W: [www.healthwatchsomerset.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchsomerset.co.uk)

W: [www.thecareforum.org](http://www.thecareforum.org)

Healthwatch visited the Carers support group to:

- inform the group members about Healthwatch Somerset
- gather feedback about the group members' experiences of health and social care services

## COMPASS CARERS SUPPORT GROUP - ILLCHESTER

Compass Disability

describe their carers  
support services as...

'Offering carers the benefit  
of meeting other carers  
who are in the same  
positions. It brings together  
people who share the  
same problems,  
frustrations and rewards.'

# The engagement

Healthwatch did a presentation about Healthwatch Somerset and the work they are currently doing.

## You Said.....

- Three people said that there are long delays getting carers assessments. The group co-ordinator also added that she has chased a number of assessment referrals stating they are urgent, but has not heard back. We were informed that sometimes people die due to the long waits which are often 10 weeks and on occasions longer. Carers at the group said that many people won't ask for an assessment until they are at crisis point and often carers don't realise they have reached this point until it is too late. Having to wait another 2 to 3 months just for an assessment is unacceptable.
- The group co-ordinator noted that safeguarding referrals are also not working well. There are often long waits before anyone gets back to them, and sometimes the staff don't seem to know what to do with the referrals. The co-ordinator commented that she referred a case where it was suspected the daughter of elderly residents was physically abusing her parents. Despite having followed up several times requesting the referral be treated as urgent, the matter is still ongoing and was first reported in October 2016 (7 Months ago). The commentator believed this was in part due to new staff.
- Three carers reported problems going through the Continuing Health Care Assessments (CHC). One commentator said that her mother ticked all of the boxes but was told that they wouldn't qualify and the assessment would be a waste of time. More guidance on assessments eligibility and how to access them is needed.
- Feedback about Summervale GP Surgery in Ilminster was generally good, and two carers praised the nursing and dispensary. All at the group said getting an appointment was generally easy. One carer commented that they had had poor advice from a GP about mental Health.
- Bracken House Mental Health Unit also received good feedback from one carer while another carer had experienced delays in being referred to a dietitian of two months, and thought that the care workers were overloaded with caseloads.
- Carers were concerned that paying for care would bankrupt them. One carer noted it was £67 for a sitter per half day, and that they could no longer participate with meetings where they gave feedback and input to Carers Voice UK.
- One carer commented that the 'This is me' form from the Alzheimer's Association designed to give important information about patients who have dementia when they go into hospital is great. However, her husband who has Dementia went to Musgrove Hospital last year, and although the form was noted in the nurses records it was not displayed by the bed which resulted in serving staff and porters not treating her

husband in the best way, for example, food was placed on the wrong side and her husband struggled to eat it due to a disability. When she raised this with PALS she was told that it is data protection that prevents the form from be displayed. Commentator noted this led to poor care.

- One carer noted that she had a 12 week wait for referral to the Somerset Partnership's continence service. She had to use her attendance allowance and pension to buy incontinence pads. When they were eventually prescribed her husband had an allergic reaction to them, and she was told these were the only ones available from the service and she would have to buy others herself. Other carers echoed that finding time to find information out (such as which continence pads to buy) takes time and effort that people who are caring often don't have.

6 Negative



1 Mixed



1 Positivebed

## Healthwatch will....

All the feedback Healthwatch Somerset gathers is analysed and used to inform the Healthwatch Somerset's quarterly reports, which are shared with Healthwatch Somerset partners including Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group, the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Board, Somerset County Council, the Care Quality Commission, NHS England and Healthwatch England. The quarterly report is also presented to the Healthwatch Somerset's Executive Group to propose further uptake of the issues identified in the report. The report will be available on the Healthwatch Somerset's website ([www.healthwatchesomerset.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchesomerset.co.uk)) and circulated to our mailing lists via the monthly e-bulletin.

Healthwatch Somerset will also feed in all these issues to Somerset Commitment for Carers, and this can be used to influence and inform the new carers' service.

## Looking forward...

Plans for future work between Healthwatch Somerset and the carers support group in Ilchester.

Healthwatch welcomes and encourages members of the carers support group to continue to contribute their feedback to us using the communication methods included at the end of this report.

Healthwatch also supports members of community groups to become Volunteer Champions, so that they can represent the experiences and needs of their community group. If you would like to find out more about volunteering with Healthwatch, please contact us using the details below.

## Tell Us Your Story...

Healthwatch Somerset wants to hear from you about your experiences so that we can tell services your needs to create the best local services.



Email us at [info@healthwatchsomerset.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchsomerset.co.uk)



Call us: 01278 264405



Write to us at: Healthwatch Somerset, c/o Somerset Rural Youth Project, Unit 2 Suprema Estate, Edington, Bridgwater, TA7 9LF

Or visit our website to find out more at: [www.healthwatchsomerset.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchsomerset.co.uk)