



Reflections from our new manager Hannah

As week three of my new role as Manager of Healthwatch Somerset draws to a close I'm struck by two things — how much I've learned so far and how many acronyms exist within the NHS!

It's been a roadshow of meetings this week, introducing myself to as many contacts as possible to start to build up a picture of how Healthwatch Somerset fits into the landscape.

Our office has gone from one to four members of staff within a week, two of whom you will meet below in this e-bulletin. It's wonderful to be part of such an enthusiastic and friendly team. We've been briefed on the potential new database CRM system and our biscuit tin is overflowing!

Coming fresh from the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Board meeting this afternoon, I am amazed by the amount of collaborative work going on in the County in particular, around SEND provision and mental health. These are

areas where I really believe Healthwatch Somerset has an important role to play in bringing people's voice to the table.

Probably the most important part, our wonderful volunteers who form the backbone of Healthwatch and work tirelessly whether it's raising awareness, reviewing key documents, providing signposting or holding local drop-ins.

Our volunteers are a rich mixture of voices from across the County and are crucial to our success in not only carrying out engagement and listening activities but also in representing the communities we live in and what happens within them. It really is a privilege to be in a role where I can work alongside the wider team of volunteers, board members and staff that make up Healthwatch Somerset.

Tanya Camberwell, Engagement Officer

Tanya's role is to seek out and listen to the people who live in Somerset, to hear their experiences of using health and care services.



Tanya records the issues and concerns raised by individuals and groups which are then used to inform commissioners and service providers. She also signposts people to where they can get the best support to help them, and works with our volunteers in order to further research and develop particular projects that form part of Healthwatch Somerset's Work Plan.

Tanya has a background in customer services and has previously worked in heritage roles due to her interest in history. She was Community Heritage Officer for the Avalon Marshes Landscape Partnership (AMLPP), which involved engaging with a wide variety of people and groups to raise awareness and support.

Tanya says, "I have personally had positive experiences of the services I have accessed in the county; however I don't feel that information and support has been openly offered and waiting lists delay recovery when imminent action is required.

"I think the main health and care concerns for the people of Somerset at the moment are that demand for services is higher than availability and access can be difficult with long waits.

"Over the next year I would like to increase awareness of Healthwatch Somerset within the county and build strong community relations."

Tanya was born and bred in Warwickshire and has lived in Somerset since 2007 and Bridgwater for 4 years. She loves walking her dog, Buster, and taking him different places.



Sheila Burrige, Volunteer Officer

Sheila is the main point of contact for Healthwatch Somerset Volunteers. She recruits new volunteers, co-ordinates all volunteer activities and arranges induction sessions, on-going training, and volunteer supervision to ensure that volunteers are fully supported in their role.

Sheila joined the Royal Navy at 17 and moved away from home in Lancashire. She worked for several years in the Somerset Military Museum and, in 1998, joined Somerset County Council and remained there for 19 years. In 2017 she joined CSW Group where she has been recruiting and supporting volunteers for their contracts with the NHS, County and District Councils.

Sheila said, "I can see from evidence gathered by Healthwatch Somerset that the main concerns for people in the county at the moment are availability of community support, access to CAMHS and access to primary care appointments.

"Whilst linking with volunteers in community hospitals, many of them told me about their personal experiences, all of which were very positive, and they spoke about the kindness and compassion of staff. Whilst working on the Community Connect project, I frequently met with people who anecdotally spoke about access to community support. The level and availability of support varied geographically and transport often appeared to be an issue.

"I hope to raise the profile of Healthwatch Somerset by getting out into communities and ensuring they know how to contact us and give their views."

Sheila is confident the public's voice can make a difference to health and care in Somerset, she said, "About 1,800 local people have told Healthwatch Somerset about their experience, nationally the figure is 400,000. So collectively that is a strong voice being represented and to be able to lobby for change. I will quote the Dalai Lama who said, 'We may sometimes feel that we can't do much as individuals, but humanity is made up of individuals; we can make a difference. As individuals we can influence our own families. Our

families can influence our communities and our communities can influence our nations."

Sheila lives in Bridgwater and loves to be active and outdoors and can frequently be found at the gym, or walking, body boarding and swimming at the beach. She plays, coaches and umpires hockey.



Enter & View Training for staff and volunteers

It was a bright and frosty November morning when the three new team members of Healthwatch Somerset set off to Dorchester for their crucial Enter & View training at the Dorford Centre, Dorchester.

Shelia Burridge (Volunteer Officer), Hannah Gray (Manager), and Tanya Camberwell (Engagement Officer) undertook this training to learn how to carry out effective and compliant Enter & View visits in the County of Somerset. The tutoring ensures that all the Healthwatch Somerset team are Authorised Representatives who will adhere to the policy procedures and codes of conduct.

Enter and View is an important part of Healthwatch Somerset's work as it provides vital feedback from service users, which in turn helps to identify elements of a service that is performing well or requires improvement. This anonymous feedback is then collated into reports and fed back to relative organisations as part of continuing monitoring of services provided by Local Authorities.

The training was provided by Evolving Communities (Healthwatch Somerset's parent company) in conjunction with Healthwatch Dorset and was attended by staff and volunteers alike. It was a great opportunity to introduce ourselves to some of the wider Healthwatch team members and volunteers, as well as sharing skills and knowledge.

Overall it was a very productive day which included supporting PowerPoint slides, handouts, and some practical tasks that incorporated useful scenarios which may be encountered and really got the grey matter working.

Healthwatch Somerset would like to thank everyone involved for a truly enlightening session and for the warm hospitality we received.



National research launched on mental health statistics

The UK's largest independent regulator of official statistics wants to hear from patients, carers and their families about how they access and use statistics on mental health in England.

Working through research consultancy Evolving Communities, the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) is carrying out a review of the mental health statistics that it regulates and wants to find out if they are providing the right information to support patients and families.

The information gathered from the research will be used to improve and shape the OSR's future provision of statistics around mental health.

The OSR want to hear from people who may be living with a mental health condition or know someone who is affected to find out what they think about the mental health statistics that are currently available and what could be improved.

[Read more...](#)



Share your views with us

Staff and volunteers will be out and about in Somerset this month to listen to the health and care experiences of local people.

Weds 27th November

Taunton Library Healthwatch Somerset Drop-in

Weds 4th December

Glastonbury Library Healthwatch Somerset Drop-in

Engagement Officer - flexible contracts, home/office based

We are building up our bank of experienced engagement officers. We offer attractive daily rates of in the region of £200 per day depending on the project.



Are you a people person, experienced in engagement? Do you have an interest in making a difference in the health, social care and community sector? Then Evolving Communities would like to hear from you. If you like the flexibility of working on short term projects, then this is the ideal opportunity for you. We are a small and friendly team based in Melksham Wiltshire but work on projects across the South West and nationally. You have the option of being home or office based (dependent on the project).

You will need to demonstrate an excellent flair for public engagement, have good attention to detail and excellent interpersonal skills plus the ability to work to deadlines. Experience of working in the Health, care or voluntary and community sector would be an advantage.

Here at Evolving Communities, our vision is for everyone to have a voice in influencing positive change in their health and care.

For more information please visit:

evolvingcommunities.co.uk/expertise/vacancies/

Tel: 01225 701851 | email: research@evolvingcommunities.co.uk



What the election means for Healthwatch Somerset

With the upcoming election, we have entered 'purdah' - the period of time before an election when public authorities are limited in what they can do. This is to ensure that they are not seen to favour one political group or interest.

Under the requirements of purdah Healthwatch Somerset is obliged to act in a politically neutral manner, meaning that we cannot comment on, or publish anything, that could be interpreted as politically leading or biased.

In theory, purdah should cease at 10.00pm on Thursday 12 December. However, should the election result in no overall majority, we will remain in purdah until an official government is formed.

If you would like to know more about purdah, the [Local Government Association](#) have released some guidance which you can view here at www.local.gov.uk

Healthwatch Somerset is the county's independent health and social care champion. We exist to ensure that people are at the heart of care. Our dedicated team of staff and volunteers listen to what people like about local health and care services, and what could be improved. These views are then shared with the decision-making organisations in the county, so together we can make a real difference.

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