



healthwatch
Bristol



THE CARERS SUPPORT CENTRE: MENTAL HEALTH CARERS TUESDAY 8 NOVEMBER 2016

Healthwatch Bristol attended the regular support group for carers who support loved ones with mental health issues to hear about their experiences of accessing health and social care services.

THE CARERS SUPPORT CENTRE: MENTAL HEALTH CARERS

The Carers Support Centre provides practical support, information and advice to carers of any age living in the Bristol and South Gloucestershire areas. They also provide a voice for carers in the area to ensure their views are heard by service providers and commissioners. For more information visit:

<http://www.carerssupportcentre.org.uk/>

Healthwatch Bristol visited The Carers Support Centre mental health carers support group to:

- inform the group members about Healthwatch Bristol, what we do and how we can help and support;
- gather feedback about the group member's experiences of health and social care services;
- encourage the group members to volunteer with Healthwatch Bristol.

There were eight people in attendance when Healthwatch Bristol visited on Tuesday 8 November and an informal discussion was had to share experiences and issues, and signpost to advocacy support and Well Aware.

Carers are concerned with the lack of mental health provision in the community and with no proper support or specialist respite care.

You Said.....

14 comments gathered

11 Negative



2 Mixed



1 Positive

Secondary care

- One carer talked about how they kept ringing the crisis line and Brookland Hall even when they knew there was nothing they could do. They felt this way the crisis team would know more about the situation and in the end they did get some support.
- Two carers who support their grandson, felt their biggest challenge was that he would not accept help and does not take any medication. This has led to the psychiatrist at Petherton not prescribing anything due to noncompliance.
- One carer spoke about their mother who is currently staying on Elgar ward in Southmead Hospital. She has lost her hearing aid, but no one seems to be helping her to find it or organising a replacement.
- One carer talked about their son who had a psychotic episode a couple of months ago but the wards at Southmead were closed so he ended up being sent to Swindon which was really difficult for them.

Primary care

- One carer said how she had had to make a big issue with her GP as they had thought she was coping with her husband. He has Bipolar type 2 and cognitive impairment, he had been taking Benzodiazepine for 20 years and was told to stop then left without any support for the withdrawal symptoms. They now have two Community Psychiatric Nurses (CPN) from Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust (AWP) and her husband is much happier. They have had care co-ordinators in the past but they do not feel they have the specialist knowledge of medication so there were often things they could not help with or questions they did not answer, but now one of the CPNs is really good and the carer said it feels like this is the first time her husband has been listened to.
- One carer talked about Leap Valley their GP practice and the telephone and triage system they use for appointments. Their husband has complex issues and they feel they have to repeat the history every time which is wearing as they are tired and worried they will forgot something. The alternative is to wait weeks to see a GP who knows the husband.

- One carer spoke very positively about Fishponds Family Practice. They find it very easy to get the same GP each time and the Practice have provided lots of psychiatric help for their daughter and got her into a support group.

General comments

- As a group they felt the support offered by AWP was not good. They had discussion concerning the lack of mental health provision in the community and with the reductions in beds and day centers people are being encouraged to stay at home with no proper support or specialist respite care for the carers. People are left at home with nowhere to turn.
- One carer talked about how because they live right on the boarder for Bristol and South Gloucestershire accessing services can be tricky as their closest services are in South Gloucestershire, but they are sent to those in Bristol, which are not so easy to get to.
- The group shared concerns at their understanding of exercise on prescription stopping. They felt this had been really useful.
- The group felt there were still issues with carers not being listened to when they are the experts on the people they support. This is a real challenge for carers of young adults as they are not told anything which they feel could be detrimental.
- The group talked about the lack of rehabilitation services or support being an issue.
- One carer talked about her husband who ended up staying at the men's crisis house, which she felt was okish. But the issues were that they do not manage medication so she had concern of giving him all his medication as she feared he would take it all at once as he would call her threatening suicide. The husband was there for five days but would not go back after that as he said his anxiety levels had got too high. He said he felt like the only one in his situation there and there was no peace. There were positive comments on the staff being really good.
- The group talked about the big gap in specialist respite for carers which leaves carers feeling isolated as there is no support.

Key themes

Services included in this report:

- AWP
- Fishponds Family Practice
- Leap Valley
- Mens crisis house
- Elgar in Southmead hospital
- Petherton
- Crisis line and Brookland Hall

Key themes:

- The lack of support in the community for mental health is a regular issue raised with Healthwatch Bristol and is a key and clear theme in this engagement summary. We will continue to work with partners, service providers and commissioners to ensure mental health provision is regarded as a priority.
- There is a lack of specialist support and respite for carers of those with mental health issues.
- Carers not being listened to or having information shared with them was an issue raised during this session, as was the importance of having an effective care coordinator to support the care of the person with a mental illness. Working together with the Carers Support Centre, Healthwatch is raising the profile of carers voice and awareness within services.

Healthwatch will....

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

Looking forward....

Healthwatch Bristol works closely with The Carers Support Centre and welcomes and encourages members of the mental health 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 Bristol wants to hear from you about your experiences so that we can tell services your needs to create the best local services.



Text us - text bris followed by your message to 07860 021 603



Email us at info@healthwatchbristol.co.uk



Call us: 0117 2690400



Write to us at: Healthwatch Bristol,
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Gill Ave, Fishponds, Bristol, BS16 2QQ

Or visit our website to see more at: www.healthwatchbristol.co.uk