

Finchampstead Knit & Natter Women's Group
“The importance of a community space”

March 2017



With thanks to Tracy, Georgia, Ann, Sarah & Catriona MacMillan, Community Development Worker

Background

Healthwatch Wokingham Borough came into effect in April 2013 as an independent organisation to give the people of Wokingham Borough a voice to improve and shape all publicly funded health and social care services for adults and children. We do this by being an independent consumer champion ensuring that local people's experiences reach the ears of the decision makers.

- We engage with and listen to what people from all parts of the community so that we can offer reliable evidence that can be trusted.
- We enable people to share views and concerns about local health and social care services
- We provide evidence-based feedback to commissioners and providers to influence, inform and, if necessary, challenge decisions and plans
- We provide, or signpost to, information about local services and how to access them

Healthwatch Wokingham Borough is keen to hear the voice of the seldom heard and commissioned the Community Development Worker for Finchampstead to run a 8 two hour crafting sessions (“knit & natter”) for women around the Gorse Ride South Area. The anecdotal evidence suggests that people talk more when they are focusing on a pleasurable activity such as knitting or crafting. A rhythmic and repetitive act can prevent manage stress, anxiety, pain and depression. Knit and Natter groups have been popping over all over the country over the past number of years. They are a great way to socailise, meet new people, whilst boosting confidence and self esteem.

Healthwatch Wokingham Borough was particularly interested in hearing from the women about their experience of local health and care services.

Emergent themes

- Easy to get isolated in own home - the peer support that the Community House provides is immense
- It's hard to know where to go to get information or help.
- Being able to learn new skills is key to self esteem and moving forward in life
- So much wasted medication - told pharmacist and GP surgery to stop repeat prescriptions but still getting medication I don't need

- If something goes wrong in the bungalow there is nobody I can contact to help. The battery in my alarm was going off, deafening me and the dog, tried to stand on a chair to take it out but couldn't reach, ended up calling the police to send a patrol around - they made someone else come out to me
- Staff turnover at CMHT is so high, having to repeat story over and over, often to young inexperienced workers
- Been told that as I have been in the mental health system for 2 years I am not entitled to more intervention.

Quotes

“It is really hard to go to Social Services because we live on an estate where Social Service take kids away and put them into care.”

“Really frightened that if I ask for help I will be judged as not being a good mum or a worthless person.” And *“it takes me a long time to ask for help”*

“There are lots of things that I thought I never could have done I have done here e.g we organized a beach trip to Haying Island for the whole community last year, we did a community cake sale to raise money for a local person.”

“I sometimes feel really low If I don't come to the Community House for more than a week - the girls come looking for me”

You don't know what you don't know.....

The morning that the Healthwatch staff spent at one of the sessions chatting to the women - we were able to identify a number of services that they would benefit from and signposted to the following....

I got a car parking ticket at the Royal Berkshire Hospital yesterday taking my son to an appointment. I spent 45 minutes driving round the car park and had to leave my car on a side road

Healthwatch signposted to **Wokingham volunteer Car drivers** to get to hospital appointments. Volunteer drivers stay with the client for the duration of their appointment, acting as a companion. This personal service is a lifeline for elderly and vulnerable residents, who may have no one else to depend upon. Volunteers drivers decide when and how far they want to drive and expenses are reimbursed.

For more information about the Transport Scheme, please call 0118 978 2446. Phones are manned by volunteers, who help out on a rota basis. Open: Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 12.30pm.

I live on my own, am independent but sometimes just want somebody to check up on me or call for a chat

Healthwatch signposted to the **Link Visiting Scheme** aims to befriend and support anyone who is isolated or lonely and who would benefit from receiving a regular visitor. The majority of those visited are older people, but there are no age restrictions applied. They visit those who are mobile and those who are housebound. If you are interested in learning more please contact info@linkvisiting.org or call 0118 979 8019

I have 5 sons, my 13 year old son is particularly good at helping me if I am having a bad day. I feel terrible that at his age he should not be having to take care of me

Healthwatch explained **Young Carers** have rights under 2 new laws (The Children and Families Act & Care Act 2014)

- All young carers under the age of 18 have a right to an assessment regardless of who they care for, what type of care they provide or how often they provide it.
- A young carer has the right to an assessment based on the appearance of need - which means that young carers will no longer have to request an assessment or be undertaking a 'regular and substantial' amount of care. An assessment also can be requested.
- Local Authorities must take a whole family approach to assessing and supporting adults so that young carer's needs are identified when undertaking an adult or adult carer's needs assessment

Get in touch with the Young Carers Support Worker, (works for Carers Trust East Midlands on behalf of Wokingham Borough Council) 0118 324 7333 0791 354 6417 ask@berkshirecarershub.org

I volunteer at the local old people's home, once a week I go to the dementia ward and paint the ladies nails.
We run a toddler soft play session at the FBC Centre once a week.

Healthwatch explained that there is a scheme locally whereby Wokingham volunteers can "bank" the hours they give in order to avail of support that they might need at a time in the future. **Give**

& Take Care (G&TC) - the idea is to improve the prospects of care for future generations when they too become elderly. The scheme is based on the idea of mutual exchange, similar to a time bank. The basic principle of G&TC is that for every hour of care you provide for someone in your community, you deposit an hour of care for yourself in a personal Care Pension Savings account. see http://www.ageconcerntwyford.org.uk/give_take_care.php 14

Healthwatch Wokingham observations

It is extremely apparent how invaluable the Community Development Service in Finchampstead is to the women that use it. It has provided them with a reason to come out of their own houses, it has enabled them to learn new skills, gain qualifications, give back to their community, which in turn has led them to feel like a valuable, worthwhile person. The women spoke about the Community House and the groups they attend, such as Adult Education courses as giving them a reason to get out of bed in the morning. The peer support they receive from the others is immense and they have used their friendships to support each other and others in the area.

It is apparent that whilst there are many services in Wokingham Borough there is still difficulty in ensuring that people are aware of what is available and what they are entitled to. **Healthwatch recommends that once the Community Navigator project is up and running fully, a community navigator spend some time in each of the more deprived estates in the Borough sharing information and how people can access services.**

Stay in touch! Help improve health & care services - tell us your experiences.



The banner features four circular icons on a teal background with a white wavy line. From left to right: a green circle with a white envelope icon, a cyan circle with a white Twitter bird icon, a pink circle with a white smartphone icon, and a blue circle with a white Facebook 'f' icon. Below each icon is the corresponding contact information.

Icon	Contact Information
Envelope	enquiries@healthwatchwokingham.co.uk
Twitter	@HW Wokingham
Smartphone	0118 4181418
Facebook	Healthwatch Wokingham