

How does Slough care for its carers?

**Exploring support for carers
in response to engagement carried out in 2017**



April 2018



Contents

Introduction & Context.....	3
Background.....	4
What support is there for carers in Slough?.....	4
Slough vision for carers.....	6
Partnership principles for supporting carers in Slough.....	6
Call to Action feedback.....	7
• How supported carers feel.....	7
• The difference support makes.....	7
• Where carers look for help.....	9
• Access to clear, simple information.....	10
• Coordination between agencies.....	11
• Carer concerns and challenges.....	12
• Supporting carers of people with mental illness or learning disabilities.....	13
• Carers' emotional wellbeing.....	14
• Respite and the need to rest.....	15
• Financial challenges carers face.....	16
• Employment.....	16
Summary.....	17
Recommendations.....	18
Providers and Commissioners Responses.....	19
Next Steps.....	23



Introduction & Context

Healthwatch Slough is the independent consumer champion for health and social care locally.

Healthwatch Slough's function is to engage with Slough people to seek views about services, signpost people to relevant information and to influence the design of health and care provision across Slough.

Healthwatch Slough is part of a network of 148 local Healthwatch across England. Healthwatch launched in April 2013 to ensure that local voices were heard and enable them to influence the design and delivery of local services. Our sole purpose is to understand the needs, experiences and concerns of people who use health and social care and to speak on their behalf. Healthwatch have statutory powers, as stated in the Health and Social Care Act 2012, to ensure the consumer's voice is strengthened and heard by those who commission, deliver and regulate health and care services.

Healthwatch Slough helps people get the best out of local health and care services; whether it's improving them today or helping to shape them tomorrow.

The reason Healthwatch Slough decided to create an opportunity for carers to share their experiences is because the Healthwatch board saw carers issues as a strategic priority, due to the number of comments we received from carers last year.

This report summarises engagement from a *Call to Action* in Autumn 2017, along with the general intelligence we collected from carers over the past year or so. The report makes recommendations about how to develop services for carers in Slough going forward.





Background

The 2011 Census data tells us there are 11,626 carers living in Slough. This is 14% of the population.

There is no shortage of research and guidance in relation to carers, yet all too often the voice of carers is 'seldom heard'. Carers will often only use services to support themselves in their caring role if they have identified themselves as a 'carer.' Often this only occurs once the carer is in crisis.

Slough Borough Council and Slough Clinical Commissioning Group both have "carers" as a key strategic priority.

The Healthwatch Carers Project

Between August and October 2017 Healthwatch Slough undertook a "Carers Call to Action"

Alongside our face to face engagement with people, Healthwatch Slough designed a survey to look at the support available for Carers in Slough.

The survey was created to capture free text. We did not collect demographic data so cannot report on gender, age, ethnicity, area of Slough the carer lives. The purpose of our survey was primarily to hear the carer's voice.

The survey was available online, on paper, through the Healthwatch helpdesk and sent out

to all partner organisation who come in contact with carers to promote the project and get as much feedback as possible. We visited numerous local groups including: Wexham Lunch Club (Age Concern), Slough Senior Citizens Keep Fit, Alzheimer's Dementia Support Group, Carers Voice Forum, The Cippenham Carers Group, Meet & Mingle, Healthwatch has a wide reach across the town and we are often able to speak with people that are not necessarily in contact with services - we held "pop ups" at Slough Observatory, the YES Shop, Sainsbury on Uxbridge Road, Langley and Britwell Libraries, Upton Hospital, Wexham Park Hospital and faith Group/Places of worship.

We received 65 completed surveys. Whilst the number of people that we spoke to may not be considered to be representative of all carers in Slough, at Healthwatch we believe that **every voice matters**. Each and every one of the 65 carer's accounts we received is valuable intelligence.

We asked:

- How well do carers feel supported
- What difference does support make in your caring role
- What are your biggest challenges & concerns
- What new or additional support do you suggest?

What support is there for carers in Slough?



Slough Carers Support is delivered by Slough Prevention Alliance Community Engagement consortium (SPACE).

The consortium has over 40 local organizations who offer information, advice & signposting. Slough Carers Support provides free advice and information to Slough carers.



Slough Borough Council recognises the important role carers provide within Slough's diverse community, promoting the wellbeing of others. It is crucial they are valued as expert partners and supported to lead as full a life as possible alongside their caring role.

With ever increasing demands for service and reduced budgets the Council have had to look at how they can target their resources to those with the highest support needs. The Council's social work teams now work in local hubs across Slough, allowing staff to better get to know particular areas needs and resources. People are supported to look at what support is available in the community.

Slough Carers Partnership Board oversee and support the implementation of the [Slough Carers Strategy](#). This aims to improve the quality of carers' lives.



Carers Assessment

All carers are entitled to ask for a carer's assessment.

Slough uses the approach of a Strength-Based Conversation. This conversation will take place face to face or over the telephone.

Your assessment will look at the impact your caring responsibilities have on your life, and any social care support for which you might be eligible.

Tell **your GP** that you are a carer, and ask to be put on the carers' register. In most cases the surgery can:

- let you know about local carers' support services
- arrange flexible appointment times to meet your needs
- refer you for a carers' assessment which look at how caring affects your life, including health issues
- give you a free flu vaccination
- provide you with a health check if you are aged over 45 years.

The **Slough Carers' Lead** at **Slough Memory Clinic** coordinates support for carers of people with Dementia.



Free digital resources to make caring easier.



There is an online resource for carers in Berkshire to support them in their caring role. Free to use, it includes specially tailored Apps, guides and training courses. To access you need to create an account on www.carersdigital.org.



Young carers have a range of resources they can tap into, including a Young Carers Café. The Young Carers' Café takes place every Wednesday evening 6-8pm at 29 Church Street.

Carers told us that it can be hard to find and access support.

However, support makes all the difference, enabling them to continue in their caring role both physically and emotionally healthy. Support helps to reduce the feeling of being isolated and alone.

For a full list of carers support resources, please go to www.sloughcarerssupport.co.uk

Slough's Vision for Carers

"I know that I am a carer, I have a positive relationship with the person I care for and have a healthy and fulfilling life outside of my caring role. I am recognized and valued as a carers in my community and I know where to go to get the right support when I need it."

From Slough Carers Strategy 2016-17

Partnership Principles for supporting carers in Slough

Partners across Slough are working together to sign up to a memorandum of understanding. This will set out an integrated approach to the identification, assessment and meeting of carers' health and wellbeing needs across Slough.

1. To support the identification, recognition and registration of carers in all organisations.
2. Carers will have their support needs assessed & will receive an integrated package of care to maintain & improve their health
3. Carers will be empowered to make choices about their caring role and access appropriate services and support for them and the person they look after

4. The partner organisation staff will be aware of the needs of carers and their value to Slough.
5. Carers will be supported by information sharing (with their consent) between health, social care, carers support organisation and other partners
6. Carers will be respected and listened to as expert care partners and will be actively involved in care planning, decision-making & reviewing services.
7. The support needs of carers who are more vulnerable or at key transition points will be identified early.

Healthwatch Slough wholeheartedly agrees with the principles set out above. However, we are keen to see how agencies are held to account if carers report feeling unsupported.



Call to Action Feedback

The following feedback, experiences, ideas and recommendations are based on the Call to Action facilitated by Healthwatch Slough.

95% of people (62 people) stated that they were a carer, with the majority (80%) caring for a family member, whether that be a spouse, parent or child.

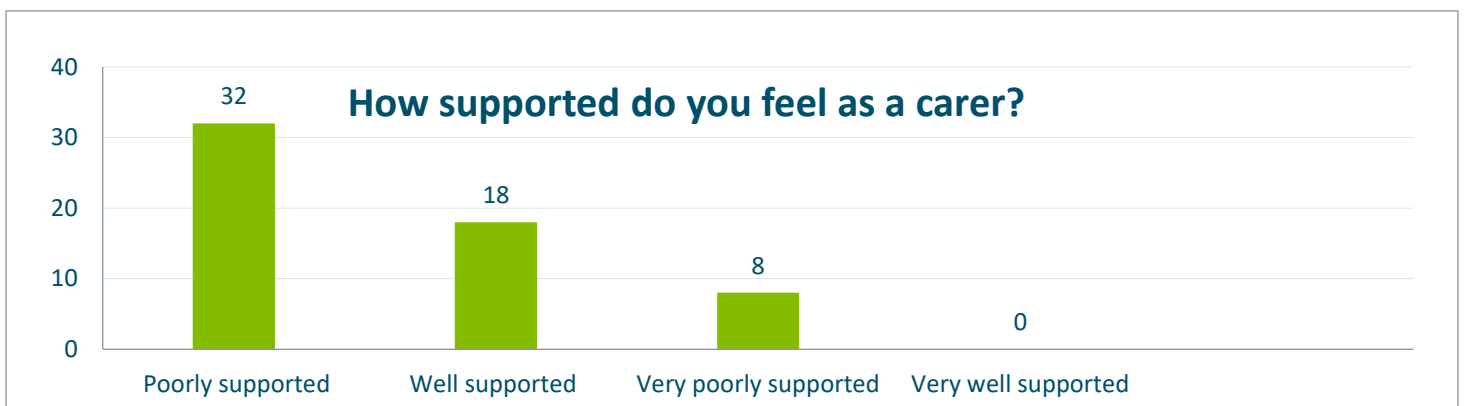
5% of people (3 people) didn't answer the question.

None of the respondents identified themselves as a Young Carer.

We are unable to ascertain who has received a carers assessment and who has not.

How supported carers in Slough feel

55% of carers (32 people) reported that they felt poorly supported as a carer.



Many carers said they aren't given training to support a loved one, which can leave them feeling vulnerable and overwhelmed. Training, such as first aid and lifting and handling, could help them feel better prepared when providing support.

The difference support makes to carers

“Support means a lot. It recharges your batteries”

Carers shared that receiving good support can make all the difference to their caring role.

When asked if they were aware of any support available to carers in Slough:

- 64% answered Yes
- 36% answered No



“Support provides a space to share ideas, talk to people going through similar things”

“Reduces isolation. Information helps getting the best health outcomes for the cared-for and the carer”

“You can talk to people in the same boat. It takes some of the strain off you. You don't feel so alone and so badly off.”

“Keeps me in touch with what's available for my son.”

“When good, it really improves quality of life”.

“Support from people who have been through the same thing makes all the difference.”

Some carers did not receive or no longer received support, or do not know how to get it.



“You have to be able to get support for it to make a difference.”

“I don't have any support”

“Not much, it's patchy, can be expensive”

“Not sure what anyone can do to support me”

“Just to get out, forget your problems. Like doing pottery at Ragstone Road. They've stopped that now. The evening classes were fun and you could park easily.... It would be good to have more

Carers can be assessed for a Direct Payment, which they can spend on services that they best think meets their needs as a carer. As of February 2018, 152 people in Slough received a carers direct payment.

“The Carers Direct Payment that I received paid for me to have driving lessons. Having my own transport meant I was so much more independent and could take my partner to hospital appointments.”

Carers found activities and support groups helpful. Some identified a need for services and a wide range of activities and training to take place during the evening and weekends for various ages.

“[I would like] Support in the evening. Support for carers aged under 40... we have different interests or needs from lots of the groups that are really just for older carers.”

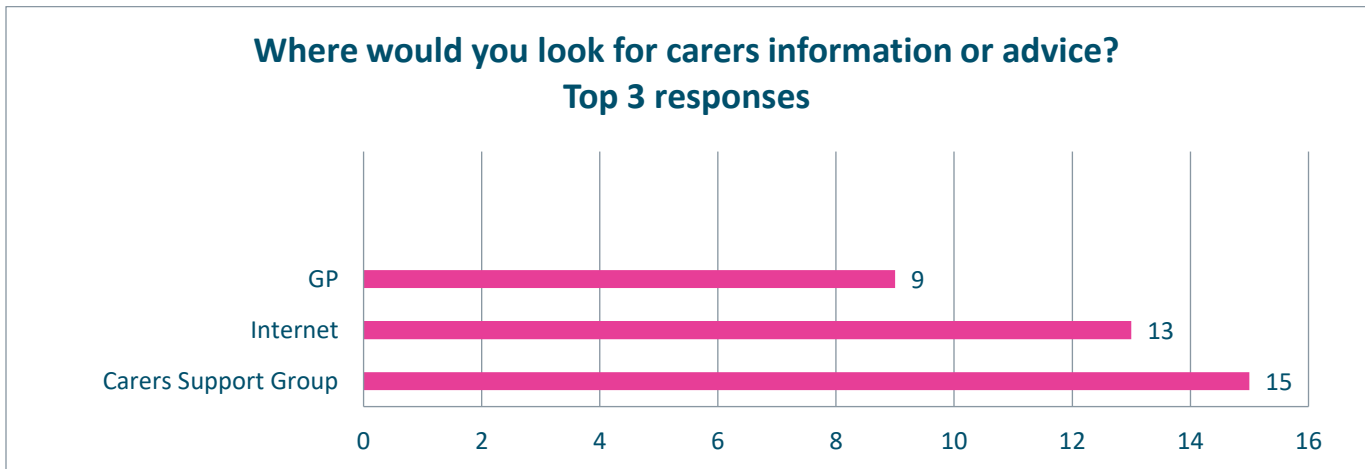
“[I would like] Information on carers' rights. Information-sharing for people who are not registered as disabled but have mobility issues.”

Carers have different experiences and backgrounds, so people said they want support to be tailored to their individual needs.

Many carers also miss out on vital support because they don't realise it is available, so more needs to be done to raise awareness.



Where carers look for help



Many of the carers that Healthwatch engaged with were not registered as a carer at their GP surgery and didn't know they should be. So many people did not get information about support from their GP.

Some carers discussed finding information and support online very difficult. They described getting lost in websites, not searching effectively, finding national rather than local information, not being able to download leaflets and not having smart phones to use the necessary apps.

“The biggest challenges for carers is knowing where to go for information.”

“There seems to be a lot of support for carers at the moment, but if you don't know how to access it or be able to get to the groups it doesn't work.”

“I have as much support as I need but know that other carers aren't so lucky. People are scared of asking.”



Access to clear, simple information

People often spoke about needing to have information available in a clear way, for all the family, and with no time limits. We heard:

"There is a lack of information at a time when you need it."

"Information is offered with a time restriction - if you do not contact Slough Carers Support by this date, then we will not contact you again" This shows a deep lack of understanding about what carers actually do and what their lives are like.

Mrs K said **"The biggest challenges for carers is knowing where to go for information. Professionals should be dealing with families from start to finish, not always passing us from pillar to post."**

Healthwatch Slough carried out a project in 2017 looking at how organisations can improve the information they give whether that be online, by phone, face to face or in a leaflet.

Healthwatch Slough found no shortage of information but the Slough resident is often left to dig it out for themselves and may not know what it is they need to know. Clear signposting is not always happening.

With regard to quality of information, most health and social care websites contain useful information, but some are poorly designed and not always kept up to date.

Carers want to be able to access up-to-date information, support and benefits more easily. They say that having one place to go to for advice and information, accessible in person, by telephone or online, would make things easier.

Healthwatch Slough recommended that Slough should have easily identifiable information contact points where all of the community can go to access health and care information.

The information contact points should be staffed by people who are skilled in online searching, to act as a conduit to more specialized and personally relevant information services.

Information centres should be publicised widely so local people know where to go to access information on health and social care services.

For more information about the Healthwatch Access to Information project go to <http://www.healthwatchslough.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Access-to-Information-Report-June-2017.pdf>.



Coordination of information between agencies

We understand that Slough partners are working in partnership to support carers, but we found the reality of this experience very different. People shared that they had to say the same information time and time again with various agencies. People often spoke about not receiving the correct information. We heard:

“There is a lack of information, too many changes within support services, no consistency, too many staff changes that slows progress with obtaining support”

“My experience has been tough. I had to find out about what was available on my own, with no help really. It is now in control. I worry about the carers that have been in my position or are still in that situation. It's really hard if you don't know who to turn to.”

“I would like to see a central system so you don't have to explain your situation several times. [And] for GPs and consultants to tell you what's available.”

Carers specifically asked for better information, better conversations with professionals, and consistent staff teams,

They requested improved signposting, access to training courses, and better support at work.

“Having one link person rather than being passed from one person to another in the council.”

“More stability in staffing at SBC - staff actually staying for a while.”

“There is still a big us and them divide. Carers should be empowered in dealing with health professionals.”

“One-stop shop for finding all types of organisations.”

Statutory services across the country are aspiring to create an integrated health and care system. However, Healthwatch Slough currently sees evidence of disjointed, unconnected organisations and support services



“You can't really understand what a carer does on a piece of paper. My suggestions would be that professionals actually follow families to gain insight.”



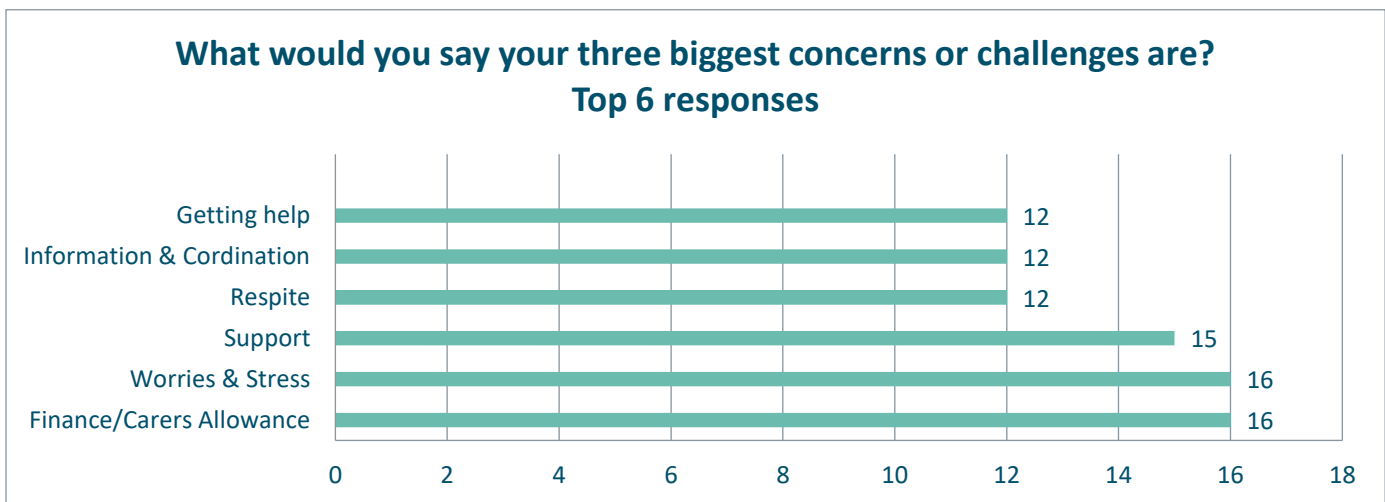
Carer concerns & challenges

Lots of carers worried about lots of different things. There was no single issue that carers worried about most.

19% of people (16 people) reported -Worries & Stress

19% of people reported (16 people)-Finance & Carers allowance

18% of people reported (15 people)- Support



Worry and stress will cause deterioration of a person's mental and physical health. We are keen to further explore how carers emotional wellbeing is recognised, assessed and supported.



Supporting carers caring for people with mental health conditions, dementia, or learning disabilities

Many carers supporting someone living with a condition which affects the way their mind or brain functions, such as diagnosed mental health conditions, dementia, and learning disabilities, spoke about professionals not always appreciating the special challenges they face. This can particularly be an issue when the condition progresses and worsens, and the type of care that they require changes.

Carers shared:

“His illness (he has mental health problems) [means] he won't participate. I have all the responsibility.

“It doesn't feel like a partnership as a marriage should. I'm on my own, but not independent because he depends on me for everything. I miss going on holidays. I have to do everything on my own”.

“All staff should undertake training such as Mental Health First Aid to better understand mental illness and how to deal with the illness.”

Groups welcoming both the carer and cared-for were liked by some, but not by others.

For these groups to be successful, carers said that activities for the cared-for need to be well staffed and be varied; and that the carers need to be able to congregate in a separate space to enable them to speak candidly.

Day centres provide essential respite, but carers discussed the need for more groups where cared-for people can be left for more than a couple of hours so that the carer can be independent and complete tasks that aren't possible when caring.



“We were made to feel as parents as if we were part of the problem. We were more or less told that if we were to refuse to have our son in the house, Social Services would be forced to step in.”



Carers' emotional wellbeing

When discussing reducing stress for carers, there were different types of support that they thought would be of benefit.

Emotional support and practical support were key factors for all of the carers Healthwatch engaged with.

Caring can be very isolating and overwhelming, so people want access to flexible support, which allows them to take a break. Some carers want to join groups to connect with people in similar situations, whilst others prefer to take time out alone.



“I watch sport, read and keep myself busy in the garden to help me relax. It’s good to have someone to talk to and who listens”.

Carers said that access to good support groups, health checks, outings, activities and having time for themselves helped with their wellbeing.

“I allow myself to attend a regular singing class in Windsor. This keeps me well”.

None of the carers Healthwatch engaged with spoke about their GP’s considering their emotional wellbeing, nor spoke about being referred to Talking Therapies in order to access counselling support.



When support is given and then taken away...

A lady cares full time for her husband who has been poorly for a long time. He received 30 hours of care a week to help with personal care.

The lady received a call and a visit from somebody from the Council saying they were going to cut the care to 15 hours per week, without even assessing her husband or asking about the impact it would have on her.

“It was more insulting to be given help by the Council and then for it to be slashed just two weeks before Christmas. Slough Borough Council’s actions put me into a crisis and I even considered putting my husband into a home full time.”

Slough Borough Council have investigated this case and are open to learning from issues that have been raised and are working to ensure communication is improved.

Healthwatch Slough have also suggested that the Council explore ways to enhance communication between professionals and carers. For instance, sending a reminder text the day before, confirming the appointment time and name of the person visiting, to improve safety and security.



Respite and the need for rest

Throughout the Call to Action, carers spoke consistently about the need for respite care. It is at times unclear if the respondents were referring to respite for the carer or cared for.

“Some family members or neighbours are doing a fantastic job but they are all so tired and often need help.”

“I would like to see respite - breathing space. Activities that don't cost too much (are a reasonable price).”

“It's a challenge to get support & respite.”



“There's not enough respite.”

Support in time of crisis

Many carers shared experiences about being tired, very tired and drained.

“Responsibility, keeping an eye on the cared-for all the time. The worry - waking up two or three times in the night for years.”

We heard carers talk about how caring takes up a considerable amount of their life and can be a constant worry. Getting help with care can be difficult and unreliable, and this increases stress on the carer.

“My father was discharged from hospital with the promise that carers to help him/support us would be in place; but this wasn't organised until the following day. “On occasions, the carer turned up very late or not at all.”

“It is a battle to get the help you need with the eligibility threshold for social care now so high.

“I am so stressed all of the time.”



Financial challenges

A high proportion of those surveyed spoke about financial challenges and loss of income as a result of taking on a caring role.

“The carers allowance plus working (capped threshold) doesn't provide sufficient money to support family.”

“Financial help is essential. We are struggling to cope and we are doing such an important job.”



Employment

Some carers shared information on how their caring responsibilities impacted detrimentally on their paid employment and working environment.

“Lack of flexibility in the workplace to meet carer needs. Lack of help for those who do not wish to claim benefits, but those who wish some help and guidance”

“I really just wish that my work was more supportive & that they understood how health appointments work. I cannot plan when my dad will be ill or need to attend an appointment.”

“A big challenge is holding down employment whilst not abandoning the cared-for person.”

“We need better employer flexibility and understanding.”

“It can be exhausting looking after someone else and juggling work. I know I can't afford to give up work or go part time so there is even greater pressure.”

Slough have joined Carers UK business forum and employer membership services 'Employers for Carers' which have lots of resources & E Learning to support carers in work. To join go to employersforcarers.org and use membership code #EFC1769.

Summary



Healthwatch Slough have created this report to:

- 1) To ensure that carers voices are heard
- 2) To assist directly in the commissioning decisions being made about carers services

This report highlights the need for:

Good support

It's essential that Slough carers receive good support, and that plans are in place for when things don't go as well as planned/expected. Carers feel they aren't trained to do their role..

Clear information

Having access to up to date relevant information and advice needs to be easily accessible.

A coordinated approach

Carers feel that they should only have to tell their story once and that services should coordinate information resulting in a better pathway of care.

Respite care & the ability to rest

Carers have said how the lack of respite impacts on emotional and physical health and how important it is to maintain this in order to continue to provide care.

Emotional wellbeing

Some carers are aware of their own wellbeing but due to their responsibilities they cannot always prioritise themselves. Many spoke about being stressed and tired.

Caring for those with mental health & additional needs

Some carers shared that they would like to see additional support, information and training available to carers who are supporting loved ones with disabilities and mental health.

Support in times of crisis

Carers shared that at times when situations and conditions changed that it can be very hard to receive information and support to reflect what is going on at that present time.

Access to activities & training

Carers identified a gap in services and would like access to a wide range of activities and training during the day, evening and weekends for various ages.

Recommendations



1. Equip carers to be able to carry out their role by providing training and support

Services to focus on building carer resilience, so carers can continue to do their caring role whilst maintaining their own health & emotional wellbeing.

2. Address gaps in activities for carers to do in the evening, at weekends & for younger carers

Commissioning ensures diverse range of support activities to meet the diverse needs of carers.

3. Improve information and signposting

Many carers felt they had to search out information, going through lots of different sources to get the information they need. Many of them said they gave up after making lots of phone calls or trying to access support that was no longer available

4. Ensure organisations explain process around receiving support clearly

Many carers spoke of having carers assessments but nothing changed as a result. Some people are confused by the “tiered” conversation, who does them, who they happen, what the implications are.

5. Consider realistic provision of respite to match the individual's needs

There is a definite need for better respite identified. Some carers would like support to access groups for the person they care for, while being able to have some time out for themselves. Many carers talked about the benefits of being able to access discounted transport, leisure facilities and other social venues. There are some carers who would like to be able to access respite that means they can leave the person they care for in a safe, comfortable environment.

6. Hold organisations that sign up to the Carers Memorandum of Understanding to account

Organisations that sign up to the Carers Memorandum of Understanding must be held to account if carers do not feel supported by their organisations.

7. Continually seek and act upon carers' feedback

Slough carers are routinely asked **“Is this working for you?”** in order to get regular and continuous feedback not just once a year in an annual satisfaction survey.



Provider & Commissioner responses



Slough
Clinical Commissioning Group

Slough Borough Council and Slough CCG welcome Healthwatch Slough embarking on the survey, as we are committed to ensuring the views of unpaid carers are heard. The Council is also required to undertake a bi-annual carers survey as part of quality monitoring and bench marking performance. However we recognise the importance of seeking an independent perspective from our local Healthwatch.

We do take seriously the findings from the Healthwatch survey even though it is based on a relatively small sample of carers. As Slough is such a diverse community more information about the carers that did respond and who they care for as this helps to target our improvement actions effectively. It is also unclear as to whether those that responded are presently known to statutory agencies and Slough Carers Support. As statutory organisations we are continually striving to improve the experiences of carers through strong partnerships working including with voluntary and community organisations.

In Slough, we are meeting our statutory duties to care and support for people, including carers, by using strength based conversations in our social care teams and with our providers. This moves away from a traditional needs based assessment to discussion with carers about how they want to live their lives. Our approach is proportionate to the support carers are seeking. It encourages them to maximise their relationships with their friends, family, and community organisations able to help them in their caring role. It is also based on ensuring they access appropriate advice and information to enable them to make their own decisions. We will provide reassurance that direct support will be available to carers at crisis points, and when they need more than what is available through their own networks. This could include short breaks or a direct payment.

Within local health services we recognise that the role of Primary Care, including GPs, have a critical role in identifying and supporting carers to help better meet their own health needs. This can be through offering flexible appointments, health checks and flu jabs as well as directing to local carer support services.

We are developing a memorandum of understanding which outlines our commitment across the partners to identify and support carers within our community.

Working with our Carers Partnership Board we have agreed that as a result of the Healthwatch and Council's own carers' survey to give immediate focus on these two areas:

- 1) Carer training
- 2) Improving quality of life.

We hope that this survey and the accompanying report will be an opportunity to promote the range of support that is available to carers in Slough.

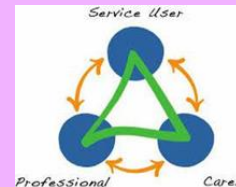


Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust's response:

Feedback received by Slough Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) from carers who support a person with mental health issues, including reflections on the statistics found by the Healthwatch Report, and service feedback gained through contact with carers.

- “We received good help”
- “Useful to talk to someone about my stresses with care”
- “To help me, to help [my partner], to work together so she can get better.”

Slough CMHT at New Horizons offer a range of support, which is evolving and developing in response to the needs and strengths of carers. The Triangle of Care initiative is used as a framework to guide and promote a therapeutic alliance between the service user, the carer, and professionals.



Carer Lead in post

Slough CMHT have a Carer Lead in post who is a trained Occupational Therapist, and main point of contact for support, information and signposting for carers. This involves meeting with carers 1:1 for a carer’s assessment, which can lead to a direct payment that is aimed at supporting the carer in their caring role; and a collaborative support and wellbeing plan for the carer.

In line with the Healthwatch recommendation, the information contact point, the Carer Lead, is skilled in empathetic listening and searching for information to share with carers. They signpost to existing resources online (such as the Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust website below) and in the community, such as events that may be of interest or benefit to carers, as well as collating feedback from carers, advocating for them, and sharing with the team.

The Carer Lead liaises with contacts at Slough Borough Council, and Slough Carers Support on a regular basis.



Carer Support Groups

The Carer Café is a monthly support group that alternates between taking place during working hours, and in the evening, responding to feedback from both carers in full time employment, and carers with young children. The report finding is reflected in how carers respond to the Carer Café, reporting that the peer support, and knowing they are not alone, is one of the main benefits of attending the group. The Carer Café is a space that can provide socially inclusive peer support from other carers who have been in their caring role for some time, as well as providing information, for example about diagnoses, different areas aspects of mental health recovery, as well as events and resources available outside of New Horizons. Coping strategies and self-care to manage with stress of the carers themselves is promoted to empower carers to manage their emotional wellbeing, such as mindfulness techniques.

Carer Training and Information Groups

The Carer Training Course at the CMHT is aimed at providing information and building on existing knowledge and skills that carers already have, to empower them in their caring role. It covers a variety of topics, such as; different mental health diagnoses, communication techniques, stress management and coping strategies, problem solving, relapse prevention, is now offered biannually to carers of adults with mental health condition diagnoses. This is also an opportunity to meet with other people that care for and support their loved one, share advice and tips, as well as not feeling that they are alone and talking with one another about their experiences.

Carer Awareness Training for Staff

We have been providing training for our staff around what support there is for carers, what their rights are, and the importance of supporting carers in their caring role alongside the service user. This was co-developed and co-facilitated by a carer, and which the feedback is extremely positive.

Hope College Courses

Slough CMHT's recovery college, Hope College, offers a range of recovery and life skills courses, which are available to carers as well as service users. Examples of course include 'Understanding Anxiety & Panic', 'Managing Depression', 'Mindfulness', 'Motivation and Change', 'Singing as a Choir', 'Read to Recover', and 'Mindful photography for carers'. There are also a variety of weekly activities on offer that aim to enhance social inclusion and physical and emotional wellbeing, as well as the sport sessions on offer from Sport in Mind. Engagement in meaningful and enjoyable activities and physical exercise is promoted throughout carer support, to provide occupational balance and enhance carers' health and wellbeing. There are two Volunteer Peer Mentors at the CMHT that promote Hope College courses in reception for a morning once a week, who keep up-to-date with what support is available for carers in the area and approach carers to increase awareness of these events and support on offer.



Plans for the future:

Awareness of what is on offer to carers -

- As the Healthwatch report suggests, there is a large number of carers who feel that they are not aware of what support is available to carers in Slough.
- Through networking and links with Social Prescribing, ensure what is on offer for carers of people under the care of Slough CMHT and which is straightforward to access.
- Increasing awareness of provision for carers through other professionals & organisations, for example liaising with third sector organisations and other statutory services, such as Slough Carer Support, Healthwatch, GP surgeries, and Slough Borough Council.
- Involve carers in the recruitment process for new members of the team.
- An introduction to the service letter is being developed at this time, detailing what support is available for carers, both from New Horizons, from other organisations, and in the community.
- Scope to develop a 'buddying' service to match carers that are newer to mental health services / in crisis, with carers that have much experience in the area.
- Develop new ways that carers can access information independently, as & when they need to.
- Develop resources in a widely spoken languages in the Slough area (Punjabi, Urdu, Polish)
- The issues around respite and the need to rest within the report are reflected by some carers at Slough CMHT - Prices of respite are reported, by those that are not entitled to assistance from the council, to be too expensive - Consider what the options are for respite for carers of people with mental health issues.
- In terms of financial challenges that carers face, to consider whether the carer assessment used in Slough is fit for purpose for people that care for their loved ones with mental health diagnoses.
- Lack of identification of young carers within the Slough CMHT is mirrored by 0% of respondents identifying as a young carer. We plan to increase awareness of young carers, and signpost to SBC Young Carers services.



Response from SPACE (Slough Prevention Alliance Community Engagement consortium): Generally we felt it would be useful if there could be more detail on the feedback given so that we can act on it to improve.



Next Steps

Over 60 carers from Slough shared their experiences, ideas and recommendations about how support services for carers could be improved. There were many reoccurring themes and from previous local reports we know that this information has been heard before.

Healthwatch Slough hopes these insights will be used to strength local initiatives for statutory and voluntary agencies to work collectively with carers, to invest wisely and to act decisively to address the challenges carers face.

Healthwatch Slough have shared the findings with all the partner organisations signed up to the Carers Memorandum of Understanding offering the opportunity for comment.

Healthwatch Slough presented the findings to the Carers Partnership Board, who have agreed to set up a number of task and finish groups to explore issues around training and quality of life.

The aspiration is that partners work together so that when we repeat the survey in two years time we don't get the same responses.

Thanks



This work would not have been possible without the support of numerous Slough people who gave up their time to talk to us about their experiences. Huge thanks to all the carers that contributed. We would also like to thank the organisations that promoted our survey and supported the project.

Healthwatch Slough



c/o P3 People, Potential, Possibilities
Unit 4, 10-14 High Street, Slough SL1 1EE

Any enquiries regarding this report should be sent to us at
enquiries@healthwatchslough.co.uk

You can download this report from

www.healthwatchslough.co.uk