

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Watchdog improving health and social care

healthwatch Gloucestershire

HEALTH and social care services in Gloucestershire are being influenced for the better by an independent watchdog organisation aiming to improve the experiences of patients in the county.

Healthwatch Gloucestershire, set up by the Department of Health, represents residents of all ages and communities – not just the loudest but those who are often unable to share their experiences because of circumstance or lack of confidence.

Janet, from Cheltenham, a Healthwatch member, shared her experiences of the wonderful support provided by district nurses during the last months of her husband's life with Gloucestershire care services. Her husband had pancreatic cancer and wished to die at home with his wife by his side.

Not only did the district nurses make this possible, but they also provided practical and emotional support to Janet so that she could be strong for her husband.

She said: "I will be eternally grateful that with the help and support of the district nurses I was able to fulfil my husband's final wishes."

"Thank you so much for making that possible, I couldn't have done it without you."

So how does it have an influence?

Healthwatch Gloucestershire has a board of 12, chaired by Dr Claire Feehily, with a broad knowledge of health and social care, a good geographical spread and most members actively representing Healthwatch across partner organisations and networks locally, regionally and nationally.

Healthwatch meets with commissioners, providers and regulators on a quarterly basis, from the Hospitals Trust to NHS England and Care Quality Commission, providing them with 'real time' patient experience with which to inform their service planning, delivery and inspections.



Healthwatch member Janet received wonderful support

Healthwatch is currently working with the University of Gloucestershire on their new Nursing Associate degree to help them embed patient experience into all learning modules and ensure future nursing professionals understand the importance of good patient experience.

How Healthwatch influenced services last year

Hospital discharge

In November 2015, Healthwatch published their report on discharge.

Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group is now looking closely at additional investment in the integrated discharge team, increased support in the community, access to home care staff and investment in the Care Home Select Service to support transfer to nursing homes.

Trusts managing our two general



Zainab, a young Healthwatch representative

hospitals, the community hospitals and mental health services have also pledged to improve their discharge processes.

Patient transport

A task group was set up in May 2014 to look at patient transport.

The report called for improvements, to non-emergency patient transport, provided by Arriva, including increased availability of transport information, consistent use of eligibility criteria, improvements to journey planning and more effective use of appropriate vehicles.

As a result, Arriva updated its patient leaflet, improved journey planning systems, its eligibility pro-

cess and relationships with local community transport providers.

The Hospitals Trust is now holding regular awareness sessions with staff, and is working to improve patient transfer to community hospitals.

Podiatry and foot care

A task group was set up in June 2014.

Recommendations included an increase in podiatrists to meet increasing demand, the introduction of diabetic foot care teams, and the provision of more effective foot care in care homes.

As a result, Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group carried out a full review of musculoskeletal

services, including podiatry and orthotics.

The hospitals trust's orthotic team is adapting its patient information leaflets and is looking at the care and management of diabetic patients with foot problems.

So what are the priorities for this year?

- Hospital discharge and aftercare review
- Early intervention mental health services for young people
- Dementia care in hospital
- Pharmacy services and access to GP services

It will also carry out 'enter and view' visits as required.

Reports due out

Reports on the above are due out soon and also include Healthwatch's work around the homeless, dentistry in care homes and 'enter and view' visits into A&E and a local care home.

your
voice
counts



Dr Claire Feehily, who chairs the Healthwatch board



Lorraine Dixon, Head of School, School of Health & Social Care at University of Gloucestershire

Get involved

If you would like more information on the work of Healthwatch or have experiences on any of the above topic areas to share, please call Healthwatch now on 0800 652 5193. email at info@healthwatchgloucestershire.co.uk or visit the website at healthwatchgloucestershire.co.uk
Membership is free by calling on the above number or visiting the website. Your voice really does count.