



Honest and open opinions from patients help to shape hospice care

Patients, their families and healthcare professionals at a leading hospice in Wiltshire are continuing to help shape the way services are run - thanks to a new group set up by Healthwatch Wiltshire.

Local volunteers from the county's independent health and care champion Healthwatch Wiltshire have spent the last 12 months meeting with patients and their families, unpaid carers and health professionals at Dorothy House Hospice Care.

The hospice commissioned Healthwatch Wiltshire to set up a User Advisory Group in September 2016 to provide an opportunity for those who use its services to give their open and honest opinions. This feedback has now helped to shape strategy and future plans for services at the hospice.

Through talking direct to patients, families and unpaid carers, Healthwatch Wiltshire's User Advisory group found:

- Dorothy House's services are highly valued but increased awareness and understanding of the range of services the hospice provides is needed.
- At the point of referral, patients want to talk to skilled staff with the time to talk to them in a personal way.
- It is important for carers and families to be heard and to be asked 'what would help you at the moment?' so that care is led by them.
- Enable people of working age and those at school or college to have access to groups at appropriate times of the day.



Susanna Watson, family support services manager at Dorothy House Hospice Care, said: "I found the feedback I received from the group very helpful. They had some very robust things to say about the whole language around 'assessments' and 'eligibility.'

"Someone commented that they did not want to be 'assessed' but wanted a more human approach where they were simply listened to. It reminded me just how easy it is to slip into bureaucratic jargon when you work in a health or social care setting."

Lucie Woodruff, Healthwatch Wiltshire Manager, added: "The User Advisory Group has given patients, families and carers the opportunity to be a critical friend and has offered a fresh pair of eyes to help Dorothy House continue to develop its services in ways that work for the people that use them.

"We've appreciated the time given by Dorothy House staff to present topics to the group, which enabled informed, productive discussions. The role of a local Healthwatch is to enable the community to help influence the way services are run and this engagement exercise has been a great example of this."

The group will continue to meet in 2018 to ensure the views of patients, families and their carers are reflected in the design and development of services provided by Dorothy House.

The full report 'Dorothy House Hospice Care User Advisory Group: a year of supporting patient and carer involvement' can be viewed at www.healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk/reports-publications.

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Healthwatch Wiltshire is a local independent organisation which exists to speak up for people on health and care. If you have used a service recently then we would like to hear from you. We use what people tell us when we meet with the commissioners and providers of services to make sure that they take account of your views and experiences.