

## Mental health forum members produce their own guide to support services

People with lived experience of mental ill health have produced their own comprehensive guide to mental health and wellbeing services on offer in Wiltshire.

Members of the Wiltshire Mental Health Open Forum worked together to compile the Wiltshire Mental Health and Wellbeing Support Services list, which details where adults, children and young people can get support, counselling, and advice on topics such as addiction, bereavement and homelessness.

Set up in July 2020, the forum is a joint collaboration between Healthwatch Wiltshire and mental health service provider Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust (AWP), and is supported by a range of organisations including Wiltshire Council, Richmond Fellowship, Carer Support Wiltshire and Citizens Advice.

The free online forum, which runs once a month, provides a unique opportunity for people to speak directly to those who run mental health services in Wiltshire, talking about their experiences and sharing their ideas for ways services could be improved.

Forum regulars wanted to create the list of contacts as a way of helping people who are struggling with their mental health to find the right support for them quickly and easily.

**One member** said: “I found, as a mental health service user, it was especially useful to learn more about the different organisations that are out there and to be able to contribute my opinions and ideas and for them to be listened to by professionals. Being part of the creation of the list was very exciting.”

AWP Local Involvement Coordinators **Teresa Bridges and Christina Gregory** said: “We have been really pleased with the way the forum is going and the willingness of people to join us virtually and get their views heard.

“Service users and providers informed us that there was not enough information out there about the range of services available to someone needing mental health support in Wiltshire, and when someone is very poorly the last thing they would do is look at notice boards or search online. Therefore they needed something that could be given to them directly, by their GP for example, and hopefully this is what we have achieved.”

**Claire Edgar**, Director - Learning Disabilities and Mental Health at Wiltshire Council, said: “Having access to support and advice for those struggling with mental health is so important and particularly so at this current time as we all cope with the challenges of life during the pandemic. This guide is going to be a tremendous help to many people to help them access the right support with ease.”

**Jo Woodsford**, Volunteer and Partnerships Lead at Healthwatch Wiltshire, said: “Our members have taken complete charge of putting this list of resources together, bringing their own experiences to creating something that not only benefits them but will help other people too. Their determination and enthusiasm has been amazing, and we’d like to say a big thank you to them for all their hard work.”

Learn more about the forum and download the guide at [healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk/wiltshire-mental-health-open-forum](https://healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk/wiltshire-mental-health-open-forum)