

# Healthwatch Voices



**healthwatch**  
Devon

Issue 5  
Summer  
2014

Your views on your health and care services

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# From the Exec's desk

Welcome to an edition of Voices that is packed full with your views on your health and care services.

There is a lot of change sweeping through health and care services at the moment. The NEW Devon Clinical Commissioning Group is consulting on changes to community services. Devon County Council is rethinking its provision of care homes and day care services. People right across the county are wondering what these kinds of changes mean for them.

This is why your views are so important. Managers of health and care services need to understand what works best for patients, service users and carers. With your feedback, they have a better chance of making good decisions. Without it, they risk making mistakes.

In this edition of Voices, you can see what people are saying about issues such as patient transport; why they go to Accident and Emergency instead of their local GP; and why Day Centres really matter. Every one of these topics has generated hundreds of comments from members of the public, and Healthwatch Devon has been able to present health and care managers with valuable insights based on the direct experiences of service users.



Recent research has shown that people are sometimes afraid to speak out about the quality of service they get in the health and care system. They don't want to be marked out as a troublemaker. Other research has shown that people often don't give feedback because they think that, as a lone voice, they won't be heard. But through Healthwatch, these concerns can be overcome, as large numbers of people voice their opinions on issues that matter to all of us. So...

**Keep that feedback coming!**

**Miles Sibley**  
**Executive Director, Healthwatch Devon**

## Introducing our new Chair



In April, following our first AGM, the trustees elected Sue White as their new Chair. John Rom, the previous Chair, will stand down, but will stay on as a trustee. He will work with Sue to ensure a stable handover.

Sue White said, "I look forward to working with Trustees, staff and volunteers, progressing the Healthwatch agenda through year two. Together I am confident we can continue building partnerships and ventures to improve future services, and ensuring the voice of the consumer is heard."

Sue has lived in Devon for 30 years and has worked in various parts of the County in health and social care delivering both children's, and adult services. As a provider and commissioner, Sue has a range of very valuable experience, but also values the importance of listening to service users and carers, and the rights we all have to receive dignified care and treatment.

We are grateful to John for steering Healthwatch Devon to a successful conclusion to its first year, and pleased that he will continue to offer his commitment and experience in the year ahead.

# Have your say

## How do you feel after leaving hospital or care?

**Have you been discharged from a hospital or care facility within the last 18 months?**

**How was it? Did you feel ready to be sent home? Did you get good follow-up care?**

Healthwatch England has said that “tens of thousands of people are potentially being sent home without proper support when they leave hospital or a care home”. This concern has led to the launch of a national Special Inquiry into people’s experience of discharge.

Locally, we have heard similar stories about some patients being unsafely discharged from hospital and care. However, many other individuals have felt happy with their discharge experience and the subsequent follow-up.

We believe that people have the right to a safe, dignified and quality service. When people are leaving hospital or care, this means that they should have somewhere safe to go, with transport, if necessary, to help them get there. And they – together with any relatives or carers, should feel that they have adequate support for their ongoing care.

We want to ensure that Devon residents get their voices heard in Healthwatch England’s Special Inquiry.

We are gathering feedback from as many people as possible so we can understand what does and doesn’t work in the discharge system. By getting feedback on your experiences we can see what is working well and what needs to be improved.

Our survey can be completed anonymously and we will not publish any information to identify you. The combined findings will be shared with managers of health and care services in Devon and will contribute towards Healthwatch England’s national inquiry.



## Have your say

**Tell us about your experience of being discharged.**

**Complete our online survey - ends Friday 11th July**

**[www.healthwatchdevon.co.uk/discharge-inquiry](http://www.healthwatchdevon.co.uk/discharge-inquiry)**

**Speak to us - by Friday 18th July**

**Call 0800 520 0640, Monday - Friday, 9.30am - 1.30pm**

**Pop into your local Citizens Advice Bureau**

**Email us at [info@healthwatchdevon.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchdevon.co.uk)**

**Send us a tweet using #thenwhat2014**



# Your views on transport to health and care services

**In May, we sought your views on the transport you use to get to your appointments.**

**Thank you to everyone who responded.**

**We have received over 200 responses and have begun analysing the results.**



## Results so far

- Three quarters of people relied on public or patient transport. The majority (65%) were using buses to get to their appointments
- 25% have used patient transport/community transport services, and 28% of those not using patient transport say they didn't know these services existed
- Nearly two thirds felt their transport was not convenient or affordable

## Here are just a few of the comments we have received:

"I recently visited my GP for a 10 min consultation travelling by bus. The whole return journey took me 3 hrs. While in my 60's. I am relatively fit and healthy with good mobility, if it was otherwise I wonder how it would feel at the end of such a journey?"

"I had a car transport arranged by a psychologist treating me for PTSD. This treatment continued for 2 years and was very successful. Later when I applied for a hospital car it was refused to me. When I questioned this they said I previously had a car because of the nature of the appointment. That's ridiculous as my walking is severely impaired. My GP said I should have had transport provided."

"When the patient transport was arranged in advance it was very convenient."

"I am disappointed I have been unaware that I may qualify to claim back travel costs."

"More staff and visitor car parking is urgently needed at Torbay Hospital."

We will continue to work our way through the responses and will publish our report soon.

## Speak Out

If you would like to share your views on patient transport or how you travel to your appointments please use the feedback form on our website [www.healthwatchdevon.co.uk/speak-out](http://www.healthwatchdevon.co.uk/speak-out) or call us on 0800 520 0640



# Speaking out on Non Urgent Care

Thank you for a fantastic response to our non-urgent care survey!

Over 500 people responded to questions about how easily they can get appointments with their GP, and what they do if appointments are not easily available.

## What we did

In March, Healthwatch England (HWE) stated that nearly a fifth of people they spoke to confessed to knowingly using A&E for non-emergencies.

Despite many people expressing concern about the NHS's ability to cope with the pressures on urgent and emergency care, they still indicated they would go to A&E with a non-emergency if they couldn't see their GP when they wanted.

So in April we launched our own survey to try and determine whether people in Devon could easily see their GP when they needed, and if they couldn't, what service choices they were making when seeking non-urgent care.

## What we found out

Our survey showed that nearly a quarter of respondents did not find it easy to see their GP. Many people cited reasons such as rigid appointment systems, not being able to get through on the phone to make an appointment, long waiting times and staff attitudes.

When asked what their next option would be if they couldn't see their GP, one in 10 respondents indicated that they would go to their local A&E department. The majority, one third, stated they would go to their local pharmacy for medical advice.

Around a quarter of those who responded were not sure of the difference between alternative services including: pharmacies, A&E, Minor Injuries Units, phoning 111 and Walk-In Centres. One person stated "I have never heard of NHS walk-in centres, local minor injuries units or 111".

## What next

Where HWE had found issues about 'lack of services being provided elsewhere', in Devon we found that respondents were unsure about the range of services available to them and a common underlying issue was about GP accessibility.

Based on our findings we have made formal recommendations to Devon's Clinical Commissioning Groups and providers. These include access to GP's, awareness of alternatives and service planning.

We hope to get a formal response from commissioners and providers during July, and will then post our report, with the responses on our website.

If you can't easily get an appointment with your GP, it can be confusing trying to work out what other options are available to you. The NEW Devon CCG recently ran a very useful "Choose Well" campaign, with handy little leaflets and cards to help patients get the best from local health services. Some of them are shown on the opposite page - but for the full range of options (shown through some nifty little videos), just Google "NEW Devon CCG Choose Well". And if you think that the CCG should be doing more of this sort of thing in hard copy, let us know!



# Bad cough?

Choose the right treatment.

Not so long ago, people thought that ongoing coughs could be cured by holding a chicken against their chest.

Thankfully, it's much easier to get fast, effective treatment these days.

**For persistent problems like chest infections, back ache and everything between, choose your GP.**



# Need help fast?

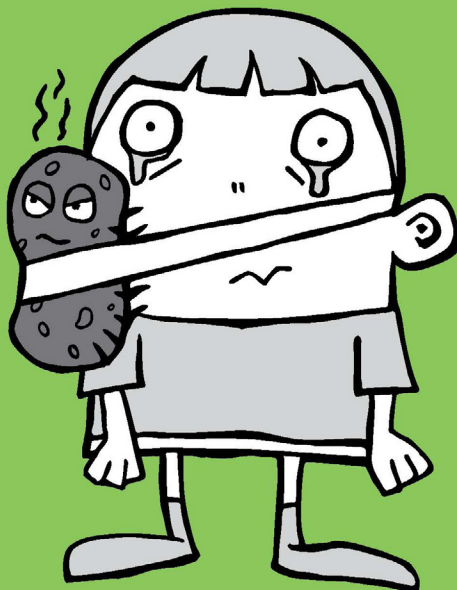
Choose the right care.

Not so long ago, people thought that aches and pains could be cured by strapping a baked potato on a baked potato.

Thankfully, it's much easier to get advice and care these days.

**For fast medical help when it's not a 999 emergency, choose NHS 111.**

**Call 111 or visit [www.nhs.uk/111](http://www.nhs.uk/111)**



# Runny nose?

Choose the right treatment.

Not so long ago, people thought that a cold could be cured by sniffing an old mouldy sock.

Thankfully, it's much easier to get fast, effective treatment these days.

**For common colds, sickly stomachs and everything between, choose a pharmacist.**



# Ankle sprain?

Choose the right treatment.

Not so long ago, people treated joint and muscle injuries by strapping an eel skin around the joint.

Thankfully, it's much easier to get fast, effective treatment these days.

**For strains, minor burns and everything between, choose a walk-in centre.**





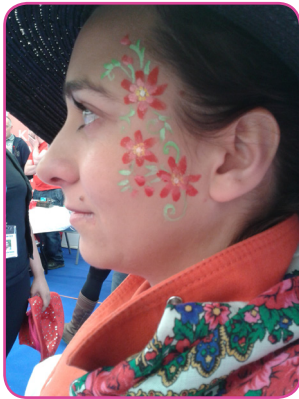


# What the health!

## Healthwatch Devon's service for children and young people

**Aggie, our children and young people engagement worker, reports from the front line of Devon youth.**

I have been working with the NEW Devon Clinical Commissioning Group to ensure that young people's voices are being heard in the design and delivery of health and social care services in Budleigh Salterton. During May, I spoke to over 200 young people. I also got children involved in a design activity where they decided what a community health hub should look like and what services should be there for young people.



At Exeter Pride we were very pleased to show our short film 'Made of rainbows'. The film features young people from the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community speaking about their experiences of accessing healthcare. The feedback we have had has been very positive and we are working with partners on a plan for future distribution. We had a fantastic day, and I even got my face painted!

In June, What the Health! went to Exeter's Respect Festival and I spoke to lots of young people about their views on health and care services.

I also attended the Diversity Events at Petroc College in Tiverton and Barnstaple. Across both events, 98 young people spoke out about their experiences of health and social care.

Looking ahead, I'm planning to visit several colleges this Autumn. In the meantime, I've got lots of speak out comments to be reading!



## Tune in for our next radio show

Our monthly radio shows are specifically for children and young people. Over recent months we've covered topics such as mental health, young carers, pregnancy and healthy living.

The next show will air on 18th July at 10.00am. The topic will be about accessing healthcare without an adult. Tune into Soundart Radio (102.5fm). You can catch up with all our past shows on our website [www.healthwatchdevon.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchdevon.co.uk)

### Speak Out!

**Scan this code to tell us what you think about health and social care services for young people!**





# Torrington residents speak out

**Last summer Healthwatch Devon helped to gather the views of people living in Torrington and surrounding areas in the Torrington 200 survey.**

**We asked local people what they thought about Torrington Community Hospital and the services and support.**

Here are just some of the views and experiences we heard...

## **Views of those who had been, or had friends or relatives that had been, patients of Torrington Community Hospital**

'The staff at Torrington were fantastic, I felt like I was part of a family, they really were excellent, my recovery accelerated very quickly and the strain on my family almost vanished. I could not have had this same treatment in my own home.'

'Whilst my condition was not serious enough to be taken to a larger hospital I was considered too ill to be at home and benefited from highly focussed medical care from the Community Hospital team.'

'The care was excellent and I'm sure helped my friends recover more quickly. The staff were very kind and catered to the patients' needs. It was helpful that local family and friends could visit easily.'

## **Views of those who have experienced home based care**

'For mum it wasn't ideal. Nurse who administered injections was rather brutal and I had to ask for a replacement. Good job I was present. For dad the support for dementia was very good.'

'Left Torrington hospital to have care at home - not as good as in hospital. Had a time slot - did their jobs but didn't engage with patient (patient felt happier with hospital care).'

'Care is fragmented with different nurses attending and information not shared. Not clear how patients are allocated to members of nursing team.'

## **What services and support they would like to see provided at the hospital**

'It should continue with its present role of providing hospital care with beds for end of life and people not needing primary care but needing care following discharge from Barnstaple before returning home.'

'Used for respite care for people who care for chronically ill patients.'

'I do feel that maintaining a number of beds at this hospital in a rural area where travel is not easy, especially for elderly people, is very important.'

## **What would successful home base care look like**

'It must be delivered by very well trained health care professionals who would be able to spend plenty of time with those they care for.'

'Home-based care can be very satisfactory providing there are enough trained staff with sufficient time to treat and chat. Carers must have long enough to talk and make sure patients can eat and drink and take medication with a friendly relationship.'

'Cared for by trained professionals on a 24/7 basis. Reassurance that contact can be made with medical professionals out of hours and that someone would visit.'

## **Speak Out**

How do you feel about your local hospital? Have you or a relative received home-based care? Share your experiences with us by using our online feedback form at [www.healthwatchdevon.co.uk/speak-out](http://www.healthwatchdevon.co.uk/speak-out) or call us on 0800 520 0640.

# Speaking out on Day Centres

Within Devon County Council's Community Life Choices Strategy there were suggestions that day care services move away from building based provision to more community-based day services.

Healthwatch Devon, with a team of volunteers, visited 24 day care centres to find out what the users of those services thought about the proposals.

## What we found out

The general consensus from service users and their carers is that Devon County Council's day care centres form a vital part of their care. They are often a lifeline to physical, mental and social interaction and are highly valued.

### Some of the key topics raised included:

- Day care centres provide an invaluable service, not only to service users but to their families and carers too
- Many were disappointed and angry about what they saw as inadequate communication
- Concern for the well being of excellent staff that currently provided care
- Many service users spoke of the time it took for them to build trusting relationships and worries that these could be lost
- Concern that the alternative services may not be suited to their situation or need.

Overall the opinions we recorded were negative regarding the proposals. There appears to be heightened anxiety amongst service users and this has possibly strengthened the negative opinion overall.

## What happens next?

On 16 June, Devon County Council published their decision regarding Day Centres. The full documents can be read on the Tough Choices website using the following address: <http://new.devon.gov.uk/dayservices/>

We are pleased to see that through consultation the voice of service users and their carers has had some impact on the outcomes.

Whilst 17 centres will still be closed, this is over a phased period with an emphasis on ensuring that replacement services will meet the needs of service users in a like-for-like manner.

One strong message that came through the consultation was the adequacy of alternative care provision in some areas. This appears to have been recognised, and a combination of mergers will see 11 services merge in to 4 centres. In 6 cases the current service will be retained.

Now the decision has been made, Healthwatch Devon aims to keep in touch with how Devon County Council implements the changes.

**If you, or somebody you know, are affected please let us know your experience through our Speak Out forms. These can be found on our website:**

**<http://www.healthwatchdevon.co.uk/speak-out/feedback-form> or you can phone 0800 520 0640.**

## Your Views

**"Where will we go if we can't come to the hub, it is worrying for everyone because they have told us this might happen but not told us what will happen if it closes."**

**"I live in the sticks and would become isolated and lonely. It is very distressing for me"**

**"We have had a list of what else is around and none of it is appropriate, people need personal care here and there is nothing else like here."**



# Devon Linkup



Devon People First\* have visited all the day centre services in Mid and North Devon, to talk to people about Devon County Council's proposals.

Below are just a few of the comments they heard during this activity

"I meet all my friends here and we do interesting courses which help us learn...I would be very lonely because I live on my own, I would miss all my friends".

"I would miss it here, I like working with the staff here and they know my needs very well".

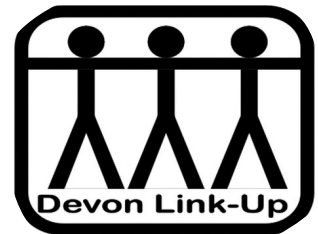
"I come from a different town because they closed that day service a few years ago, I don't now want to lose this because there is nothing else in our area for us".

"It is very important for people with learning disabilities to have trust and feel comfortable with our staff".

"Who would organise things like group activities because the Direct payments support people won't".

"There are a few private organisations that do activities in the day but we feel these are not right for us".

\*Devon People First and Devon Link up are Healthwatch Devon's partners for engaging those with learning disabilities.



# Devon Senior Voice

Members of Devon Senior Voice\* have been actively engaged with Devon County Council over its proposals to close nearly three-quarters of its day-care centres, which provide welcome support to many people.

We have urged strongly that where such services are withdrawn, the council will ensure that satisfactory alternative provisions are in place to meet the needs of all affected individuals.

There are widespread fears that if the closure plans are put into effect, many people could become more socially isolated as a result, especially if a replacement service is further away from a person's home.

The council's proposals are part of the increasing trend by the government to encourage local communities, voluntary organisations and private agencies to take greater responsibility for the running and development of services - such as the care of the elderly, youth provision and libraries - from which local authorities have to withdraw in the face of government cutbacks.

This presents a particular challenge for voluntary groups like Devon Senior Voice, whose membership consists entirely of older people with the wealth of experience necessary to carry some of these services forward.

But we are not unique in needing still more energetic and active people across the county to bring fresh thinking and new ideas to help us fulfil this new task.

Those forward-looking volunteers also need to ensure that in its rush to make budget cuts in order to meet government deficit-reduction targets, Devon County Council honours its statutory duties of care for the more vulnerable citizens in any part of the county.

\*Devon Senior Voice is the older peoples partner for Healthwatch Devon.



# An enjoyable and humbling experience volunteering for Healthwatch Devon



## Debbie describes her recent experience of volunteering for Healthwatch Devon.

I've had a traumatic journey in and out of Bi-polar disorder and this involved many admissions into the local psychiatric ward. However, a few years ago I had a defining moment that changed my way of thinking and with the help of a dedicated professional team I began to recover.

Now life for me is stable, although I'd like to express that my recovery didn't happen overnight, but slowly which was probably best for me. I'm working with adults with learning difficulties where I have learnt about my strengths and weaknesses. I am made to feel that I am useful and valued. Exercise has also been part of my weekly routine and has a positive effect on my wellbeing.

I like to attend my local Be Involved Devon\* (BID) meetings which are friendly and informative and I like to hear of others' stories of recovery and triumph over adversity. Through the BID newsletter I find out about other ways I can get involved and the BID workers also contact me from time to time to let me know about things I might be interested in.

One of these things was some work Healthwatch Devon were doing around the proposed closure of a number of Devon County Council day centres. Ed from BID rang me up and said Healthwatch were looking for volunteers who would be willing to go and speak with people at a local day centre

in Bideford to hear their views. I said I wasn't sure about this, as I wasn't confident it was something I could do. However I thought about it for a while and decided I'd give it a go.

I rang Dawn at Healthwatch and she talked me through everything. So pen and paper in hand I arrived at the centre and sat down and spoke with the people there. I have to say I thoroughly enjoyed the day. I ended up spending 3 hours at the centre and spoke with 8 people. The people I spoke to were all elderly and I was humbled that they shared their stories with me. They were human stories - it was their lives. I had to be careful not to let things stray too far off the subject as there were all sorts of things they wanted to tell me. I heard a lot about how scared some of them were about the centre being closed down.

The next day I typed up the stories I'd heard. I wanted to make sure I wrote down the words people used, but also that the meaning was clear. It helped that I recently did a college course on creative writing. Once I finished typing up the stories I sent them into Healthwatch. I hope the stories will help the Council understand the feelings of the people who use the centre. It was a pleasure to do this work and I'd like to do more in the future.

Debbie

\* Be Involved Devon is the mental health engagement partner of Healthwatch Devon





Do you want

to **make**  
a **difference**

help us to encourage others  
to speak out on health and  
social care services  
in Devon



interested in

**Volunteering?**

**For more information about volunteering with us:**

**Call:** Caroline Lee on 01392 248919 ext \*115

**Email:** [info@healthwatchdevon.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchdevon.co.uk)

**Website:** [www.healthwatchdevon.co.uk/volunteer](http://www.healthwatchdevon.co.uk/volunteer)



# Citizens advice bureau

The Citizens Advice Bureau works in partnership with Healthwatch Devon to provide one-to-one support for individuals seeking help with health and care issues. Here is an example of an individual they have assisted recently.

A young mother approached CAB seeking support in making a complaint about her GP practice.

Her daughter was born with a serious condition and has had several operations. One day her little girl was having breathing difficulties.

The mother rang the hospital where her daughter was being treated and was told to take her straight to her GP. They rushed down to the local surgery on foot, as they do not have a car, and when they arrived they were kept waiting. The child was eventually seen by the GP and he told them to call an ambulance.

The mother complained to the Practice Manager and had a meeting with them, but heard nothing back.

She has said that this Practice seems to be run inefficiently with prescriptions getting lost and appointments difficult to get. She has also said that she would like to change her GP but cannot without any transport of her own. She knows of

others who have left the surgery because of the unsatisfactory service they had received.

A CAB Healthwatch Champion referred this case to NHS England, who will investigate. The Practice Manager has now been in touch in follow up their complaint. Healthwatch Devon has been invited to be present at a meeting in the near future.

Have you experienced something similar? Would you like support in making a complaint or just to discuss the matter further. You can pop into any Citizens Advice Bureau in Devon or call their advice line on 08444 111 444.

Alternatively, contact Healthwatch Devon on 0800 520 0640.



## Hikmat Devon CIC

Hikmat Devon is well placed to offer Healthwatch Devon's services to people from black and minority ethnic communities across Devon. Hikmat's unique and personal approach works within communities, using and benefitting from multilingual staff chosen from the communities we are engaging with.

Staff are aware of health and social care issues within their communities and are able to ensure people have their voices heard through either Speak Out forms or from attending a specific focus groups. People from BME communities, with assistance from Hikmat Staff, have recently been speaking out about using day centres and their Hikmat Hub and physical activity to improve health outcomes. Feedback has shown that people are really benefitting from accessing these services in their local area.

If you are living in Devon and are from a black or minority ethnic community, Hikmat Devon can help you have your voice heard.

For more information please contact:  
Jenny Challenger, Tel: 01271 260247 Email: [jenny.sahara@gmail.com](mailto:jenny.sahara@gmail.com) or  
Asif Mohammad Email: [aasif@hikmat.com](mailto:aasif@hikmat.com). Or visit our website  
[www.hikmatdevon.co.uk](http://www.hikmatdevon.co.uk)





# Devon Carers voice

Carers have recently been helping to review the short breaks services offered through Flexible Breaks Grants, the Take a Break sitting service and trips and activities provided to young carers. Devon County Council and the Northern, Eastern & Western (NEW) Devon and South Devon & Torbay Clinical Commissioning Groups who fund the services led the review which has become necessary as the number of carers identified and using the schemes continues to increase.

Carers worked alongside health and social care staff to make suggestions about what they thought should be the priorities used to determine how these schemes can be made sustainable for the future. The Carers Strategy Delivery Board are now looking at the ideas which came out of the workshop and will be making recommendations to Devon County Council about what should happen next.

Carers will be kept informed of any changes by Devon Carers\* which provides the 3 short breaks services reviewed and can also be kept up-to-date with other opportunities to comment on services



relevant to them and the person they care for by getting signed up to our Devon Carers Voice fortnightly e-bulletin. Anyone interested in getting this should e-mail [l.self@westbankfriends.org](mailto:l.self@westbankfriends.org) or [pamela@sdevoncarers.org.uk](mailto:pamela@sdevoncarers.org.uk) or speak to Lynsey Self by calling 08456 434435

Carers made a huge contribution to this workshop talking about the real impact these schemes have on them and other carers and worked really hard to develop ideas about how to help make sure the money that is available is spent in the best way. We want to help keep carers voices shouting loud so please do get in touch to find out how you can get involved to give your feedback on issues that matter to you.

\*Devon Carers Voice is a partner of Healthwatch Devon.

# Devon Disability Network

The Devon Disability Network (DDN) has been actively promoting Healthwatch Devon and supporting people with disabilities and Deaf people to speak out on health and social care services and to participate in consultations. For example, more than 50 of our members took part in the Transport to Health and Care services survey.

Recently, some of our DDN members have been involved in the 'Patients in Control Programme: Whose Health is it Anyway?' This programme looks at what is important to patients and carers in promoting and supporting self-care / management and using this to create a set of resources to be rolled out to Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) or Area Teams in the second year of the programme. The resources are to build on current insights, examining what's needed from the patient and carer perspective and creating different options for co-design of future services, so that they are truly built around the needs of the patient. The programme is funded by NHS England and led by Kent and Medway Commissioning Support



Through this programme, DDN members with long term conditions have joined focus groups to share their views on how to change systems and services locally to achieve the above. After 3 sessions the group considered the theme of 'emotional support' and identified a number of opportunities for service development to inform phase 2 of the project.

Following the focus groups, Living Options has been working with RAISE, South West Forum and other project partners and the local CCGs to develop proposals for implementation. Feedback from members of the focus group has been immensely positive and there is a strong will to be involved in phase two of the Programme.

# Out and About

## Respect Festival

Exeter Respect is the city's annual celebration of diversity where creative arts are used to engage the wider community in saying no to racism and all forms of prejudice.

Our marquee was there for the whole weekend, welcoming all to share their views and experiences on health and social care.



## Exeter Pride

Exeter Pride is an entirely volunteer-led Pride Parade and the biggest free celebration of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities in the region.



This year, we pitched our marquee in the Healthzone and invited people to come and talk to us about health and care services, whilst making beautiful bunting and have their faces painted.