



# How does Slough care for its carers?

## March 2018

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

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.

Between August and October 2017 Healthwatch Slough undertook a "Carers Call to Action". We received 65 completed questionnaires.

We asked carers:

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

This is our summary report for carers.

# Our key findings

## What carers told us about support



**“Support means a lot. It recharges your batteries.”**

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

**“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.”**



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

**“I don't have any support”**

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

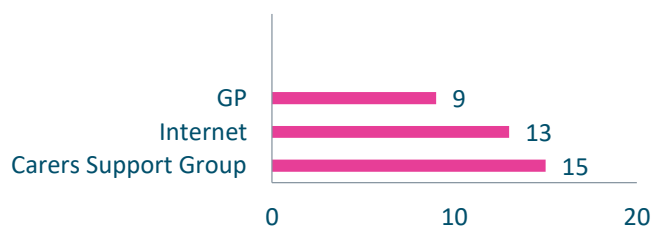
**“Not sure what anyone can do to support me”**

## Finding information and help

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

Many of the carers who talked to us were not registered as a carer at their GP surgery. So they didn't get information about support from their GP as they should.

Where would you look for carers information or advice?  
Top 3 responses



**“There seems to be a lot of support for carers at the moment, but if you don't know how to access it ....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.”**

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

64% answered Yes

36% answered No

# Carer concerns & challenges

Carers worried about lots of different things. They particularly mentioned:

- General worry & stress (19%)
- Finance & benefits (19%)
- Support (18%)

Stress affects your mental and physical health. We are keen to explore further how carers' emotional wellbeing is assessed and addressed.

None of the carers said that their GPs discussed their emotional wellbeing, nor referred them to Talking Therapies for counselling support.

## a) Protecting your wellbeing

Carers want flexible support to take a break. Some carers want to join groups to connect with people, whilst others prefer time out alone.

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

**"I watch sport, read and keep myself busy in the garden to help me relax."**

## b) Tiredness & getting a break

Many carers shared experiences about being tired and drained. They spoke about the need for respite care.

**"It can be exhausting looking after someone else".**

**"Responsibility, keeping an eye on the cared-for all the time....waking up two or three times in the night for years."**

**"There's not enough respite."**

**"It's a challenge to get support & respite."**

## c) Help with care

**"Lack of or poorly co-ordinated support from Adult Social Care".**

**"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."**

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

## d) Financial challenges

A high proportion of those surveyed spoke about financial pressures.

**"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."**

## e) Juggling employment & caring

**"I know I can't afford to give up work or go part time so there is even greater pressure."**

**"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."**

**"We need better employer flexibility & understanding."**

# Summary

Healthwatch Slough carried out this project:

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

Our report highlights the need for:

## **Good support**

It's essential that Slough carers receive good support, and feel equipped for 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 and other needs**

Some carers shared that they would like to see additional support, for carers who are supporting loved ones with mental health conditions, dementia and learning disabilities.

## **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.

# Our recommendations



Healthwatch Slough made the following recommendations to Slough Borough Council and the other organisations responsible for helping carers.

- 1. Equip carers to be able to carry out their role by providing training & support**
- 2. Address gaps in activities for carers - evenings, weekends & for under 40s**
- 3. Improve information and signposting**
- 4. Ensure organisations explain process around receiving support clearly.**
- 5. Consider realistic provision of respite to match the individual's needs.**
- 6. Make sure the organisations which sign the Carers Memorandum of Understanding do what they say they're going to do**
- 7. Continually seek and act upon carers' feedback.**

## What next?

Healthwatch Slough have shared the findings with health and care organisations across Slough, including Slough Borough Council and NHS decision-makers,

We also presented the findings to the Carers Partnership Board, who have agreed to look at ways of improving local carers' quality of life and training

We are encouraging organisations to work together so that when we repeat the survey in two years time, we won'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 who contributed. We would also like to thank the organisations that promoted our survey and supported the project.

You can read the full report at:

**[www.healthwatchslough.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchslough.co.uk)**

Any enquiries about the project should be sent to us at [enquiries@healthwatchslough.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatchslough.co.uk) or contact us on 01753 325 333..

**Healthwatch Slough**  
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## What support is there for carers in Slough?



**SLOUGH**  
Carers Support

### Slough Carers Support

provides free advice and information to Slough carers. It is run on behalf of Slough Borough Council by SPACE (Slough Prevention Alliance Community Engagement).



### Slough Borough Council

The Council's Adult Social Care team works with adults with disabilities and illnesses and also their carers. You may already be in contact about the person you care for, but they can help you too.

They will know about the area in which you live, and can advise on support available locally. They can carry out a carers assessment (so can Slough Carers Support and Berkshire Healthcare).



**Slough**  
Clinical Commissioning Group

Do 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
- refer you for a carers' assessment (see right)
- give you a free flu vaccination
- provide you with a health check if you are over 45

### Carers Assessment

All carers are entitled to a carer's assessment. This is a conversation held by phone.



Your assessment will look at the impact of caring responsibilities on your life, whether you might be eligible for social care support and other sources of support available to you.

### At Slough Memory Clinic

a Slough Carers' Lead coordinates support for carers of people with Dementia.



**Berkshire Healthcare**  
NHS Foundation Trust



### An online resource from Carers UK

is available for carers to support them

in their caring role. It includes specially tailored Apps, guides and training courses. Just create an account on [www.carersdigital.org](http://www.carersdigital.org) quoting the free access code #EFC1769

Carers told us that it can be hard to find and access support. However, support makes all the difference, enabling you to continue in your caring role both physically and emotionally healthy. Support helps to reduce the feeling of being isolated and alone.

**You can find a full list of support for carers at [www.sloughcarerssupport.co.uk](http://www.sloughcarerssupport.co.uk)**