

Speaking Out to improve carers experiences of accessing support & information

Brenda* is a carer for her 88 year old mother who lives with her. Brenda's mother was having problems remembering things which made Brenda question the possibility of dementia.

Brenda contacted Healthwatch via the Helpdesk as she felt confused and frustrated by the organisations that were linked to her mum but did not link with each other.

Brenda's first point of contact with regards her mother's cognitive decline was her GP.

Brenda had trouble registering herself as her a carer. As a result, the GP surgery would not talk to Brenda only her mother about appointments, prescriptions etc. This was problematic as her mother could not retain information. Although this was eventually rectified, the GP surgery did not signpost or provide any information regarding carers or suggest Brenda have a Carer's Assessment.

Brenda contacted Wokingham Borough Council to arrange an assessment for her mother, in order to get aids in her home. Brenda was told of a 2 year waiting list. Six months later Brenda received a letter from the Council saying she had been removed from the waiting list as she had not been in contact since the initial request. At the initial meeting with the council Brenda was given no signposting or information about carers services.

Eventually Brenda's mother was referred to the memory clinic. Brenda found that the memory clinic assessment impersonal and not person or family centred, lacked information at the time of the visit and about who to contact after the visit if there were problems. Brenda then contacted Healthwatch Wokingham for help and advice.

I'd like to thank Healthwatch Wokingham for getting involved and facilitating the meeting with the Memory Clinic who were very good at proposing improvements. I am now also connected into carers services and the local council assessment team. We need to ensure carers are identified as early as possible and signposted to carers services that can help them in so many ways

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