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Healthwatch Leicestershire listens to substance misuse service users

Healthwatch Leicestershire has spent time listening to the service users and staff of Swanswell, a national alcohol and drug charity, and has heard that improvements in communication between care services such as GPs, Hospitals and Substance Misuse services could improve the recovery of service users.

Respondents told Healthwatch that there is a lack of communication and coordination between different services and professionals. For example a greater dialog between University Hospitals of Leicester (UHL), GPs and Swanswell would provide a more joined up approach for service users of substance misuse services. Some services users told Healthwatch that they had been admitted to hospital as a result of substance misuse but were not asked if they needed additional support or if they were currently accessing support services.

One service user who wanted to reduce their alcohol consumption felt that no one cared and that not enough effort was made to provide medication to help them to stop drinking. Another service user commented: "GPs need to be more understanding about alcoholism".

Healthwatch Leicestershire's findings also revealed positives which could be built upon. For example, many service users who attended peer mentor groups also commented that SMART Recovery sessions were helpful.

Rick Moore, Chair of Healthwatch Leicestershire comments: *"Substance misuse users are some of the most vulnerable and stigmatised and as such, their voices often go unheard. That's why, in light of Alcohol Awareness Week, Healthwatch Leicestershire gives voice to their experiences. It is crucial that service users are listened to so that service providers can help them in their journey to full recovery."*

Based on the findings from the report, Healthwatch Leicestershire has spoken with Swanswell who are considering the recommendations outlined in the report.

Jennifer Hames, Swanswell Assistant Director said: “Swanswell were happy to support Healthwatch Leicestershire with the production of this report and welcome its findings. We’re pleased that the report highlights the positive difference we make to people recovering from problem drug and alcohol use. The report is also clear that more can be done to provide service users with a complete and holistic treatment journey. Swanswell has taken this feedback on board and we’ll continue to work closely with our colleagues in other services to ensure we join up effectively, improving treatment delivery.”

Recommendations have also been made to other providers and commissioners such as Leicestershire County Council and Clinical Commissioning Groups.

The full findings of the report are available online at <http://www.healthwatchleicestershire.co.uk/resources>

- ENDS -

Editor notes

A full copy of the Healthwatch Leicestershire insight report ‘Road to Recovery: Voices from substance misuse service users and staff at Swanswell’ is available from <http://www.healthwatchleicestershire.co.uk/resources>

About Healthwatch Leicestershire

Healthwatch Leicestershire is an independent consumer champion for health and social care in Leicestershire. The organisation helps to shape and improve local health and social care in our community. Healthwatch Leicestershire is part of the Healthwatch national network, established by the Government to ensure local patients and users have a greater input to shaping and designing local services.

About Healthwatch England

Healthwatch England is the independent consumer champion for health and social care in England. The organisation has independent statutory powers, as stated in the Health and Social Care Act 2012, to ensure the consumers’ voice is heard and best practice is delivered in health and social care nationally. Healthwatch is also focused on providing leadership, guidance and support to the development of the Healthwatch network. To find out more please go to www.healthwatch.co.uk.