

# South Birmingham Long Term Conditions Group

(Also known as the  
Patient Health Forum)

Members of the South Birmingham Long Term Conditions group (also known as the Patient Health Forum) are living with, or caring for people who live with, a range of long term health conditions.

The forum provides an opportunity for people to meet others with similar issues, but it also gives them a voice and the chance to influence services by giving their local CCG insights and feedback about the health services they all use.

At the regular meetings, the forum hosts a range of speakers, including representatives from other organisations, charities and agencies, who offer extra advice and signposting. It also holds regular health and wellbeing activity sessions, as well as entertainment and social activities,

The group is funded by Birmingham and Solihull CCG and facilitated by Gateway Family Services.

Membership is open to anyone who lives in South Birmingham, or is registered with a South Birmingham GP, and lives with a long term health condition, or cares for someone who does.



## Case Study: Leslie

- carer responsibilities •
- social isolation •

### “Margaret helped Leslie meet people who understand”

Leslie, who's in his 50s, is sole carer for his wife, who has Alzheimer's. He was referred to Gateway by his GP, who felt Leslie needed some support – because he doesn't have access to respite, he is quite isolated and experiences low moods.

Leslie was assigned to a Wellbeing Navigator, Margaret, and their first contact was over the phone about a week after he was referred. They had a chat and Leslie admitted that, although he tries to stay upbeat, he sometimes finds his situation frustrating. His wife doesn't like to leave the house, which means Leslie isn't able to go out very often. He tries to go for a walk every day, but doesn't like to leave her alone for very long.

With this in mind, Margaret began to look at getting Leslie some respite and helping him to get out and socialise a bit more. He lives very close to where we hold a regular Patient Health Forum – a social group for people with long term conditions and their carers – so the first thing she did was invite him and his wife to the next meeting, a fortnight away.

Over the next couple of weeks, Margaret called Leslie to chat about the help she and other supporting agencies could offer him. She put him in contact with carers' groups and respite providers, and continued to remind him about coming to the meeting.

Although his wife wasn't keen, Leslie attended the next Patient Health Forum and has been to every meeting since. He enjoys socialising there, and finds it useful to be able to talk to other people about his wife's condition and his own situation as a carer. The meetings also include speakers from other agencies and community groups, so Leslie has been able to access further information and speak to support providers directly.

Both Leslie and Margaret would like it if his wife came to the meetings too, and Margaret has visited the couple at home a few times to try and encourage her to attend, but so far she has declined.

Margaret has continued to stay in touch with Leslie, passing on information that might be useful, both for him personally and in relation to his caring responsibilities. She still calls or visits before each Patient Health Forum meeting to try and encourage Leslie's wife to come along.

At a recent Patient Health Forum meeting, Leslie told us, “I don't get to go out much because I don't like leaving my wife at home, but I really like coming to these [meetings]. I feel like people here really understand”.

Gateway Family Services is a community interest company with over a decade of experience providing one-to-one health and wellbeing support to people in Birmingham and the wider West Midlands.

Call Gateway Family Services to find out more: 0121 456 7820

