

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: Valerie

- social isolation
- caring responsibilities

“I wouldn’t miss it for the world”: Valerie’s story

Valerie was directed to the Long Term Conditions Group 13 years ago by course leaders at the Hazelwell Hub in Kings Heath, where she had been on a self-management course to help her manage her deteriorating eyesight. She’s been a regular ever since.

Valerie says, “I have been a member since 2006 and I love going to the group. I wouldn’t miss it for the world. Most of the people have some kind of long term health condition and the group helps you manage and discuss the problems you may be experiencing.”

As well as support with her own long term health condition, the group has also helped Valerie with another important aspect of her life: being a carer. She had been a nurse for most of her life and, despite having to give up the job she loved when her eyesight started to fail, she continued to care for others. She was a carer for her husband for 23 years before his death in 2015 and now, she is a part-time carer for her granddaughter.

Valerie tells us she finds the presentations from visiting speakers very useful, both for help with the issues relating to her own health condition, and the practical aspects of caring for others.

She says, “We had one gentleman give a talk on depression and anxiety, and how he managed the problem. Another man came from Age Concern, giving lots of information on benefits and planning your own funeral. We’ve had talks on medication and prescriptions and we also do meditation and seated exercises.”

But for Valerie, it’s not just about the practical help. The group has provided important emotional and social support over the years, and she’s made some close friends.

Over the last few years especially, since the death of her husband, going to the group regularly has been helping Valerie with her grief. Like many other group members, she finds that the friendly but discreet and respectful atmosphere makes it easier to talk to others about her feelings. She tells us that she likes the fact that so many people are happy to talk about shared experiences, particularly relating to being a long term carer for a loved one, and bereavement.

She says, “I’ve had a hard life, but I’ve always loved caring for people, so I like coming to the group because I can do that here. But being here helps me too. I can talk to people about any issues I might be having, and that alone – having someone to talk to and discuss problems with – is far better than anything.”

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

