



# Unpaid Carers Experience of mental health during the pandemic



# Who are we?

## Healthwatch Bath and North East Somerset

- We champion the views of the public for health and social care.
- We are an independent statutory body, with the power to make sure NHS leaders and other decision-makers listen to feedback and improve standards of care.
- We worked with the NHS England E&I Commitment to Carers Rapid Learning Pandemic Legacy Project to deliver a piece of research to hear the experiences of unpaid carers and their view about mental health during the Covid 19 pandemic.
- The research was carried out in Swindon and Bath and North East Somerset which are part of the BSW ICS.

# What did we do?

- Project was carried out in March 2022
- Used online Surveys in Bath & North East Somerset and Swindon
- Attended group meetings/sessions with unpaid carers and families/advocates experiencing mental ill-health
- Analysed information/data supplied from carers centres based in each locality and national statistics taken from Carers UK.
- Incorporated existing sources of feedback/reports so that people don't have to repeat themselves (data collected by Local Healthwatch).
- Ran a Twitter poll.

# What were the challenges?

- People do not recognise themselves as carers when caring for loved ones.
- We were NOT able to go into care provisions to carry out interviews to gather feedback directly from their staff and service users due to COVID restrictions and capacity at the time.
- We had limited input from ethnic minority carers, they are less likely to self-identify as carers.
- Only able in timescale to talk to a small proportion of carers

# Key Findings

- Pandemic had a significant impact on carers – isolation, lost support and a lot have not got that support back
- Carers feel they are not being listened to and their own mental health is negatively impacted
- Care coordinators are overstretched, high turnover, it further impacts on unpaid carers and other service users.
- Ethnic minorities generally do not self identify as carers.
- Rural nature of Bath and North East Somerset hinders Carers getting support
- One positive was ‘virtual’ get togethers made carers feel less isolated.

# What has happened since ?

- We have shared our report findings both locally and nationally with organisations that can make a change
- Increased Healthwatch engagement with carers across B&NES's communities and shared their feedback
- Continued working with the local Carers Centres to ensure their voice is heard
- The three Carers Centres in BSW are meeting with AWP in March to look at how they can help AWP staff identify carers during their work & make referrals for tailored support (BSW Older people & mental health sub-group)
- Working with the local hospital to improve support for carers when the people they care for are inpatients

# Questions for the Health & Well-being Board ?

What further steps are B&NES Council and other Health & Wellbeing Board partners taking to:

- Identify carers ?
- Recognise and meet their needs for support as carers ?
- Listen to their voices as an 'expert' about the person they care for ?

## For more information

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