

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: Dennis

- social isolation
- poor mental health

“I wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for this group”: Dennis’s story

Dennis started coming to the Long Term Conditions Group after what he refers to as a “mental breakdown”. Now, he’s a key member of the group – a committee member with a strong social network.

Four years ago, Dennis’s GP referred him to a Gateway Health Trainer for help with weight management. However, at this point in his life Dennis was also quite mentally unwell. He’d been isolating himself at home, and worrying, to the point where he was having suicidal thoughts.

Dennis’s stress and worry problems came to a head one night and he emailed several people to ask for help. First thing next morning, his Health Trainer Richard visited him at home and arranged crisis support, including an emergency psychiatric appointment and ongoing help from a home treatment team. And later, Richard also introduced Dennis to the South Birmingham Long Term Conditions Group.

Dennis says, “I hadn’t been out for years and years. My flat was my comfort zone. But Richard explained what the group was like and what it was for. He gave me the names of the people who ran it, and I went along.

“When I first started coming, it was difficult to speak to people. I was so nervous, I would just stay quiet. Then the committee gave me a job as a ‘meet and greet’ person. The first time I did that, I remember my hands shaking so much I spilled the tea.

“But over the next couple of years my confidence really built up. Now, I can stand up at the front of the group and make announcements, introduce people and thank the speakers.” He seems surprised at himself. “I even tell jokes!”

Dennis says he likes the group because although people have health issues and can talk about them if they want to, it’s not the focus of the meetings. He says, “We all know everyone has a reason to be here. We’ve all been through something, but you don’t have to talk about it. You can concentrate on the entertainment and the discussion.”

As Dennis is talking, the meeting is finishing and a stream of friends stops by to remind him to call them or meet up later in the week.

He says, “I don’t want to be dramatic but I really believe I wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for this group. I haven’t had suicidal thoughts in ages. It’s a stepping stone, if you like, from having an illness to having something to look forward to.”

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

