

## **Healthwatch Report: Summary of the findings of the survey into provision of GP/Primary Care Facilities for the Homeless in West Sussex**

### **Introduction**

During our work with Healthwatch, gathering stories about the experiences of our clients with local health services, we have collected some anecdotal information from those who visit us with housing and homelessness problems. On checking with Healthwatch England we were told that everyone domiciled in the UK is entitled to GP services - even the homeless - according to NHS regulations. But the feedback from some of our clients tends to paint a quite different picture.

- The problems experienced by the transitional homeless can be very different from the experience of the 'street homeless'. The transitional homeless may be able to keep their existing GP and register with a temporary GP while they find, or are found a permanent home within the area from which they came. Unfortunately, the services they usually receive through their permanent GP, such as pre-natal and maternity care, child health and development checks, disability care packages, and community care may be disrupted but they do not face the dangers which the 'street homeless' may encounter – especially during the winter months.
- In the case of the 'street homeless' who are chronically sick they may experience problems getting continuous medication and treatments for their conditions. Those who require medical certificates for benefit purposes may also find this a problem as they move between GP Practices. One of our clients became homeless in Haywards Heath and moved down to Hove to take up hostel accommodation. He signed on with a GP in Hove but when he was evicted from his accommodation and had to live in a van he was de registered by the Practice – although he was still living in the GP's area. He then went to Horsham where he has family connections and although he registered as homeless with the LA, a Horsham GP refused to register him even though the client had informed the Practice that he was low on his medications used to treat his chronic condition. It was not until he was able to register with Sussex Oakleaf (a charity helping vulnerable people acquire accommodation) that he was able to sign onto a GPs' list as he could now produce a temporary accommodation agreement with Mid Sussex District Council. By the time the client received a new prescription he had been without his medication for just over a week.
- With regard to medical certificates a homeless client in Crawley left Open House with her partner (who was asked to leave) and was sleeping rough in a tent near the Hawth theatre. She returned to Open House to see the GP for her medications and to ask for a sick note for

benefit purposes she was told that she could not see the GP as she is no longer staying there and she cannot use the facilities such as the Day Centre. She then went to the Crawley Health Centre Drop-in facility but was told she could have her prescriptions but she would need to see the GP at Open House for the sick note as he had dealt with it previously. They now have no accommodation, no food, and both should be undergoing treatment for severe mental health problems.

- The street homeless who obviously do not have an address may find it very difficult to register with a GP in another area especially if they are deleted from their original GPs list. Usually they will not have identification bearing an address, or photographic ID which may be too expensive to arrange. The street homeless can of course go to A&E when they are ill but while they may receive initial treatment there may not be any follow up and should they require a medical certificate this may not be forthcoming.
  
- Several of our clients have reported that when homeless they suffered accidental injuries where treated at A&E and then were told there would be no follow up as they did not have a GP. In one case a client seeking treatment for injuries sustained in a hit and run incident was told that he would need to travel down from Redhill, in Surrey, to Brighton where there is a GP service for the Homeless which he could sign up for. The hospital staff were not aware of any GP services, for the homeless, nearer than Brighton.

**(Sources: Healthwatch Survey forms collected between October 2014 – October 2015; Bureau Evidence Forms collected by CASSCA during 2015)**

**Denise Sarney  
Healthwatch Co-ordinator  
Central & South Sussex Citizens Advice (2015)**

**The GP/Primary Care facilities, together with Sussex  
Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)  
Information for the street homeless of West Sussex**

**Brighton Homeless Healthcare**

Telephone: 01273 310350 Monday to Friday 9:00 to 17:00.

Address: Brighton Homeless Healthcare, Morley Street, Brighton, BN2 9DH

Website: <http://brightonhomelessnesshealthcare.nhs.uk>.

N B. will register people. Those temporarily housed or rough sleeping from West Sussex are accepted.

**SWEP:**

Brighton & Hove are operating four night shelters and using B&B accommodation for SWEP this year, including two additional premises on standby if required. *Contact details for the public:* Free phone 0808 1680414

Email: [brighton.rssrt@cri.org.uk](mailto:brighton.rssrt@cri.org.uk)

**Chichester:**

**STONEPILLOW - CHICHESTER HUB**

**Address**

The Old Glassworks Day Centre  
St Cyriacs  
Chichester  
PO19 1AJ

**Phone**

01243 775925

**Fax**

01243 771914

**Email**

[oldglassworks@stonepillow.org.uk](mailto:oldglassworks@stonepillow.org.uk)

**Website**

[www.stonepillow.org.uk](http://www.stonepillow.org.uk)

**Services offered by Stonepillow::**

Day centre for homeless and vulnerably housed people. **GP surgery (Thurs pm), mental health nurse.** Substance misuse triage, needle exchange.

**Target group**

Homeless and vulnerably housed people.

**Area served**

Chichester and surrounding areas.

**SWEP:**

**Arun District Council**

On SWEP nights any rough sleepers in Arun will be assisted. Temporary accommodation in Bognor Regis will include a night shelter from November to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2014, managed by Stonepillow.

For further information contact [Housing.options@arun.gov.uk](mailto:Housing.options@arun.gov.uk)

**Chichester District Council**

Chichester use their own temporary accommodation and for SWEP use two separate unfurnished flats. Chichester do not have any hotel or B&B accommodation in the district but do occasionally use other temporary accommodation arrangements if required.

Contact the CDC Careline for services available 24/7 on 01243 788688

**Crawley**

Crawley Walk-in Centre: **Now at Crawley Hospital ( Open 24hrs – every day)**

**Crawley Hospital**

01293 600300

West Green Drive Crawley West Sussex, RH11 7DH

The above centre will treat the street homeless but will not register those without an address.

**Crawley Open House:** Small Medical Centre at Three Bridges site with weekly GP sessions. (NB not clear whether this open to non residents of Open House) **Tel:** 01293 447702

**SWEP:**

## **Crawley Borough Council**

During SWEP periods Crawley may accommodate rough sleepers in B&B or in winter shelters in one of five local church halls, working in partnership with the local direct access hostel, Crawley Open House. The public can contact Crawley in person at the Housing Help Point in the Town Hall from 9am to 5pm daily, by telephone on 01293 438607 or by email: [housing.options@crawley.gov.uk](mailto:housing.options@crawley.gov.uk)

## **Horsham:**

No services found

CCG did not reply to enquiry sent by Healthwatch asking for information on GP/primary care facilities for the homeless.

### **SWEP:**

There is no hostel accommodation in Horsham District for homeless and In times of severe weather B&B may be arranged by the Local Authority.  
Tel: **01403 215100**

This winter (2015) the local churches are opening a night shelter. Clients can be referred from other agencies to Mary (the Shelter's co-ordinator). More details to follow but clients should be referred to Horsham Citizens Advice Bureau at present for referral.

Our best advice to homeless clients in this district would be **not** de register from current GP and sign on, if possible, as a temporary patient if they are sent to a hostel in another area.

## **Mid Sussex:**

No services found.

CCG did not reply to enquiry sent by Healthwatch asking for information on GP/primary care facilities for the homeless.

### **SWEP:**

There is no hostel accommodation in Mid Sussex District and in times of severe weather B&B accommodation may be arranged outside the Local Authority area. Call 01444 477574 or email [HousingAdvice@midsussex.gov.uk](mailto:HousingAdvice@midsussex.gov.uk)

Our best advice to homeless clients in this district would be **not** de-register from current GP and sign on, if possible, as a temporary patient if they are sent to a hostel in another area.

## **Worthing:**

### **Health Central Surgery for Homeless People**

**Tel:** 01903 821647 **Fax:** 01903 205697

**Address:** Health Central Surgery for Homeless People, Central Clinic, Stoke Abbot Road, Worthing, West Sussex, BN11 1HE

#### **Services:**

Offering all usual GP services.

#### **SWEP:**

### **Adur District & Worthing Borough Councils**

For information on accommodation during severe weather: Email [housing-service@adur-worthing.gov.uk](mailto:housing-service@adur-worthing.gov.uk) or call Worthing Housing on 01903.239999 for further information