

Healthwatch Walsall Priorities Report

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Contents

Background	Page 3
Introduction	Page 3
Sample	Page 3
Methodology	Page 4
Findings	Page 5
Next Steps	Page 10
References	Page 11

Healthwatch Walsall Priorities Report

Background

Healthwatch Walsall is an independent consumer champion created to gather and represent the views of the public. Healthwatch play a role at both national and local level and make sure that the views of the public and people who use services are taken into account.

At a local level, Healthwatch Walsall work to help people get the best out of the health and social care services in their area; whether it's improving them today or helping to shape them for tomorrow. Local Healthwatch is all about local voices being able to influence the delivery and design of their services – not just people for who use them, but for anyone who might need them in the future.

Introduction

The report is for Healthwatch Walsall to find out what its work focus for engagement and research should be for the coming year. In order to achieve the objective of making sure that the views of the public and people who use services are taken into account within Walsall, Healthwatch Walsall have carried out an annual public survey between August and December 2016 to identify key priority areas for 2017/18. Priority areas are important to ensure that everything Healthwatch Walsall do is informed by the local community. The priorities identified will help to shape the research and engagement activities carried out over the next 12 months.

Sample

The survey was disseminated to the Healthwatch Network, publicised on the website and distributed at local engagement events. The survey targeted a broad reach of the Walsall Community including hard to reach hand seldom heard groups.

The survey was available on line from August until December 2016. It was promoted by various Twitter and Facebook messages encouraging people to complete the online survey. The details about the survey were also emailed out to all the Healthwatch Walsall contacts. The survey was promoted at various community groups, groups supporting hard to reach people, church groups, health settings, the hospital and in schools as part of a forum exercise.

The survey achieved a total of 298 responses. Whilst the number of participants targeted is unknown due to online dissemination, the general rule of thumb (See Niles 2006) based a population of around 270,000 is that a sample size of around 200-300 has a margin of

error of around 5.63% and a confidence interval of 95%. This means for example that if 32% of respondents think that A&E is the number 1 priority area for Walsall Manor, it could in fact be as low as 26% or as high as 38% if surveying the whole population. The confidence level is a measure of how certain we can be that the sample accurately reflects the population, within its margin of error. Given the sample size that was obtained for this survey, we can be confident that this is reliable and a fair representation of the local community views.

Methodology

Following Healthwatch Walsall's Annual General Meeting (AGM), a range of key areas were identified as important with regards to Health and Social Care in Walsall. Whilst all aspects of health and social care are important, Healthwatch needed to refine these areas in order of public priority so that we are realistic in our targeted work planning for the coming year.

Healthwatch England annually identify 5 national priority areas to focus their line of work for the next 12 months. Local Healthwatch adopt the same process through a local priority survey and other intelligence gathering. The survey was designed so that the public could rank the list of key areas identified at the AGM in order of priority, the top 5 are then selected for our 2017 Healthwatch Priorities.

The priorities identified are spread across both the health and social care arena which includes Walsall Manor Hospital, Community Health Care and Social Care; the public could choose what is most important to them within each of these categories. See table 1 for the list of key areas the public could choose from:

Table 1

Walsall Manor Hospital	Community Health Care	Social Care
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Improvements at Walsall Manor 2.Outpatients 3.Maternity 4.Paediatrics 5.Ambulance Services 6.A&E 7.Cancer Services 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.GP Out of Hours Service 2.GP Access 3.Community Care (district nurses etc.) 4.Support for Carers 5.Access to Dentists 6.Mental Health 7.Child and Adolescents Mental Health 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Children's Social Care 2.Adult Social Care Assessments 3.Residential Care Homes 4.Domiciliary Care 5.End of Life Care

The priorities outlined in the findings section below have been weighted based on their proportion across each priority level. That means that if a key area has a high number of respondents ranking it as a high priority but also a high number ranking it as a low priority, the overall ranking will be weighted to ensure that it is balanced and representative of all respondents of the survey.

Findings

From the categories that were provided to the public for prioritisation, there was some natural links and overlap such as GP Out of Hours and GP Access; and Children's Social Care and Adult Social Care Assessments.

Findings from the survey identified that where participants had prioritised Out of Hours Services, they had also prioritised GP Access; and where participants had prioritised Children's Social Care, they had also ranked Adult Social Care Assessments as a priority (See chart 2 and 3).

On that basis, these categories were merged from four to two, when weighting the overall priorities and are now labelled "GP Access and Out of Hours" and "Adults and Children Social Care".

Walsall Manor

Participants were asked to prioritise from 1-7 the key areas of focus listed in table 1 for Walsall Manor, number 1 being the most important and number 7 being the least. A&E was ranked the highest priority out of 7 key areas for Walsall Manor Hospital (See Chart 1)

Chart 1: Walsall Manor Priorities

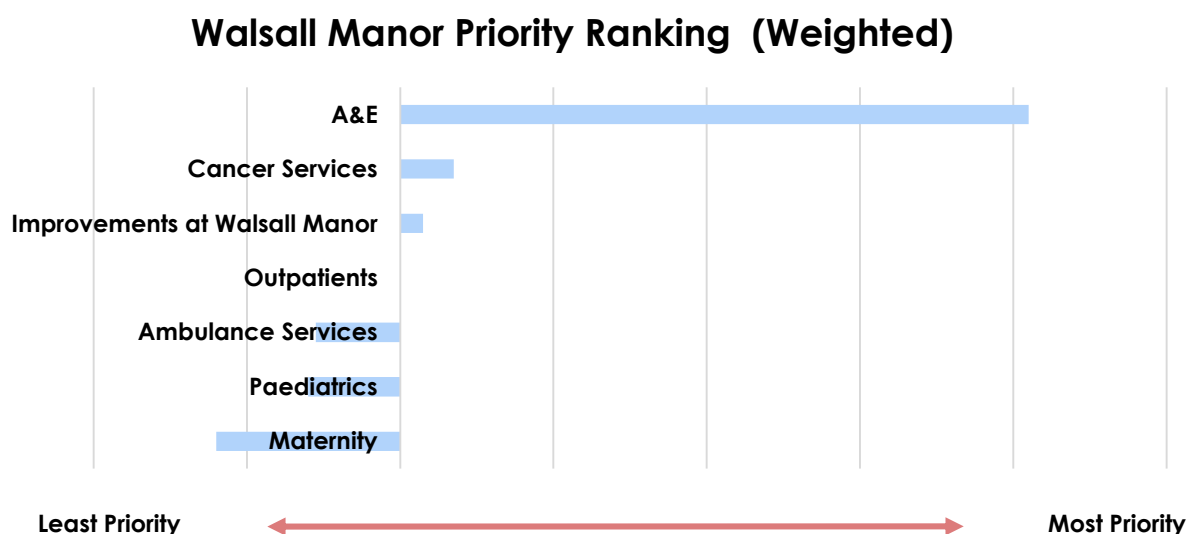
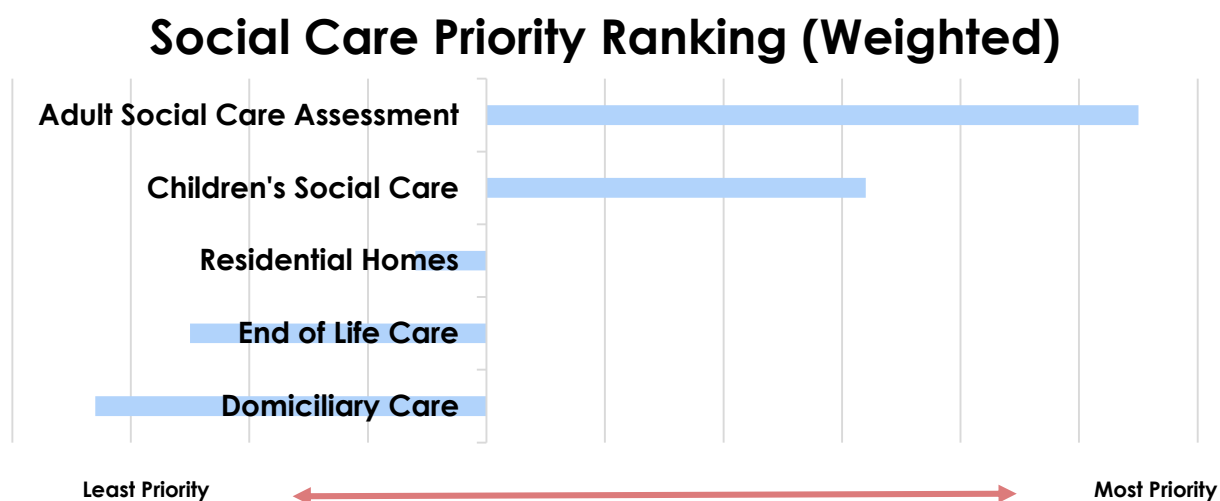


Chart 2: Social Care Priorities



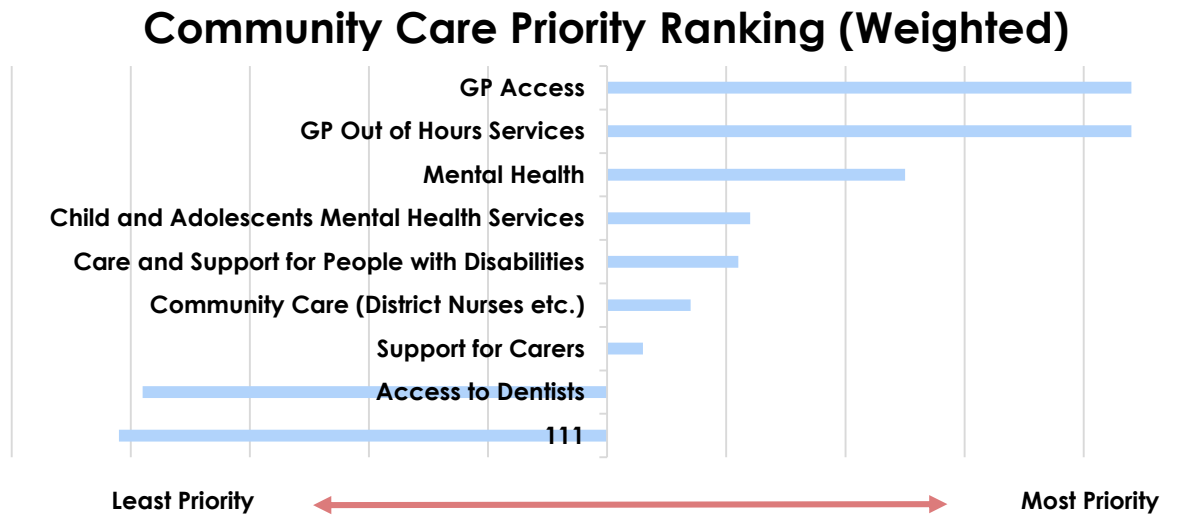
Social Care has been identified by Healthwatch England as one of the top five priority areas which evidences that public concerns around this issue are on a national basis. Healthwatch England have confirmed that almost half of local Healthwatch have picked up on public concerns and poor experiences around social care across the country. These concerns are predominantly relating to domiciliary care with 1 in 5 local Healthwatch now citing this as a priority. Healthwatch England stated this is “*double the number that raised it last year*” which suggests it is a growing problem in England. Within Walsall however, Social Care Assessments appears to be of most concern. Domiciliary care was identified as a separate issue based on public feedback, yet this ranked lowest amongst social care issues in Walsall.

No other additional priority areas were identified by participants when given the option to comment.

Community Services

Participants were asked to prioritise from 1-9 the key areas of focus for Community Care. As shown in Chart 3, GP Access and GP Out of Hours were rated the top priority by the public. As mentioned previously, because of the similarity and importance of these two categories, they were grouped into ‘GP Access and Out of Hours’. Both key areas received comments from the public that caused overlap in that participants referred to out of hours’ services when discussing difficulties in access for example.

Chart 3: Community Care Priorities



When asked to provide comments on any other priority areas that were not shortlisted from the AGM feedback, participants identified, Autism Services, Rehabilitation, Specialist Care Agencies for BME Groups, the time allocated for care workers, and Mental Health Crisis Prevention to be other areas of concern (See figure 2).

Figure 2: Additional areas of concern about Community Care expressed by the public



Whilst these additional key areas are all important, they have not featured strongly in feedback from the public and cannot therefore be selected as Healthwatch Priorities.

Overall Weighting

Following the weighting of key areas across Walsall Manor, Social Care and Community Care, the public were then asked to select key area they consider to be the most important areas of focus for 2017 across all three categories explored. Out of all priority areas put forward across each three categories, the top 5 priorities selected by the public are A&E, GP Access and Out of Hours, Mental Health (Including CAMHS), Adult and Children's Social Care, and Cancer Care.

Top 5 Priorities Selected by the Public

- 1 A&E**
Concerns about the long waiting times, low staff numbers and poor quality of care
- 2 GP Access and Out of Hours**
Comments about difficulties accessing GP appointments, particularly for mental health and elderly care. It is also felt that Out of Hours Services should be more accessible
- 3 Mental Health**
Many issues raised, regarding medical staff attitudes towards mental health, funding, early intervention, and access to mental health support
- 4 Adult and Children's Social Care**
Concerns regarding long delays for assessment and support, families not being informed, poor communication, lack of wrap around support services, and discharge from Hospital with inadequate social care support
- 5 Cancer Care**
Main concerns relate to lack of information, communication and support provided before and after diagnosis

A&E is a very strong top priority featuring the top priority by approximately 40% of respondents. This predominantly relates to long waiting times for treatment, bed blocking, the lack of staff in A&E and as a result, poor quality of care. Healthwatch Walsall is shortly going to be publishing a report shortly on *A&E communications* that was undertaken last year which will help inform the focus of work programme for the next 12 – 18 months.

GP Access and Out of Hours services has been prioritised following bad experiences of accessing GP appointments. Some participants have commented about the lack of

home visits and emergency support which is considered to be *'non-existent these days'*. Healthwatch Walsall is shortly going to be publishing a report shortly on *GP Performance* that was undertaken last year which will also help inform the focus of work programme for the next 12 – 18 months.

Mental Health is considered to be one of 5 top priorities for Healthwatch in 2017. This follows concerns about the lack of access to mental health support in the community, including Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services, the lack of funding to provide wrap around services whilst waiting for treatment, long delays in accessing treatment and poor attitudes of GP staff towards people experiencing poor mental health. Mental Health has also been flagged as a top priority by Healthwatch England when considering national concerns. Over half of all local Healthwatch have identified Mental Health as one of their priorities and the context of those concerns are consistent with feedback obtained by Healthwatch Walsall. Healthwatch England commented their national intelligence shows *"lengthy waiting times for treatment referral, GPs 'not understanding' their mental health needs and a lack of community and crisis care"*.

Adults and children's social care has received a range of feedback predominantly around receiving timely assessments. This is an important priority for Healthwatch given the impact that inadequate social care provision can have on the whole health and social care system. Whilst assessments are the primary concern regarding social care for adults and children, the lack of wrap around support services for people whilst waiting for an assessment has also been flagged as an issue.

Cancer care is the final priority identified for Healthwatch for 2017. This follows bad experiences and comments about the lack of communication given to families of people with cancer, lack of information regarding diagnosis and the lack of support services available to people with cancer and their families before, and after diagnosis.

Next steps ...

Following the identification of Healthwatch Walsall Priorities for 2017, Healthwatch will at their forthcoming public event on 28 February 2017 ask the people attending to scope out the specific focus of each of the top 5 main priorities the public have told us about to identify the level of engagement and research that is needed. This will also look to suggest a priority ranking for each of the specific focuses that the session develops.

This results of the public event and the findings of the two reports that are due for publication will then be discussed at the Healthwatch Walsall Advisory Board to plan a programme of work taking account of the public priorities but also needing to retain capacity to look at other significant impacts on health and social care such as the STP for the Black Country and West Birmingham and the Walsall Together agenda as two examples.

References

Niles, Robert, 2006. "Robert Niles' Journalism Help: Statistics Every Writer Should Know," RobertNiles.com. Retrieved 03.01.16 from <http://www.robertniles.com/stats/>.

Healthwatch Walsall GP Performance report: due for publication

Healthwatch Walsall A&E communications report: due for publication