
Insight Bulletin – May 2022

About Healthwatch Surrey

One of the statutory duties of Healthwatch Surrey is to share residents' experiences of health and social care with the people and organisations who make decisions about those services.

This bulletin highlights some of the themes we've been hearing about recently. As we are once again engaging with people face-to-face in the community we have added the source to each of the experiences we feature.

Praise and Thanks

We frequently hear from people praising the care they have received. This month we have focused on what we've heard recently from more vulnerable residents – people with mental ill health, learning disabilities or those with communication challenges

- I'm with xxx Medical Centre, I moved here about 2 years ago and registered with them. They helped me with my medication, they've always made me feel safe and have been helpful. I have terrible anxiety, depression and more recently psychosis.

Community Engagement – Foodbank 1

- Sturt house is a good place to live, they offer therapy like DBT, CBT, trauma therapy, I can have 1:1 talks with the psychologist if I want them. The staff are helpful and caring... I manage my medication, do my own washing, cleaning and shopping and I love to bake. I'm enjoying working here, it feels like the right next step... it's boosting my confidence and the work is soothing and calm. It's building my confidence each week.

Community engagement – Richmond Fellowship

- The children have been provided with clothing and toys When the midwife comes here, she has a translator...For me, having an interpreter is the most important thing in my maternity experience. My language from Afghan has different dialects. When I get an interpreter they aren't always my dialect so there are some words that I don't understand or

find difficult. I've been happy with the care I have received so far. My baby's movements slowed around 5 months but I was seen and reassured.

Community Project

- We went to the vaccine centre today and my son was vaccinated by Claire - She was extremely knowledgeable and reassuring and made sure my son held his arm in the most relaxed way possible - she explained how the muscle worked and how the vaccine would flow better in a relaxed muscle. THANK YOU.

Healthwatch Surrey Helpdesk

Struggles accessing mental health care for teenagers

We continue to hear about long waits and “bouncing” – where people are referred to a series of different services and struggle to get the care they need. This month we focus on the experiences of teenagers and their parents. Violence, self harm and suicidal ideation are all too common themes in this age group who may be waiting for several of their secondary school years for assessment or treatment.

- Over the last couple of months his anxiety has reached another level ...in the past 6 years he was referred to CAMHS 5 times and each time he was discharged from their service as he doesn't meet the criteria. He was admitted to hospital a few weeks ago following on from a big meltdown leading to police having to restrain him and an ambulance taking him to A and E... CAMHS took so long to give authorisation for the hospital to administer a medication for him to calm him down that he was restrained for hours on end. He has had 5 meltdowns in 11 days since leaving the hospital and has once again been discharged by CAMHS and the most recent meltdown 5 days ago lead to a very close fatality with him almost jumping off a bridge.

Healthwatch Surrey Helpdesk

- I have a 13 year old with mental health issues. I went to our GP a year ago, as it had become too much for us to be able to cope with ...and they had become suicidal - we were at crisis point. ...We were referred to CAMHS and seen quite quickly, we were assured that CAMHS would follow up within the week. A week later they did call back but contacted my child who we had explicitly asked not to be contacted under any circumstances... resulting in a mental health episode where my child

ended up in A&E ... we were told that xxx needed to see a psychotherapist ...The service was currently at capacity but they were able to outsource to Relate. At this point it was 6 weeks until we could see Relate, they were suicidal and so I ended up having to leave my job as they would not go to school, they have now been off for a year. Around this time, they were in the grip of major body issues, unable to look in the mirror and they came out as trans. Relate told us they couldn't help, because [name] has a history of self-harm.... At this point we were desperate and paid £800 to see a psychiatrist privately.

Community engagement, Carbon Zero

- Jane's son, now aged 17, was referred to CAMHS in 2017 for assessment regarding ADHD and ASD... An informal review suggested that he would not score sufficiently highly in any assessment to be diagnosed with any of these conditions so he was not taken on by CAMHS. Jane thinks that this assessment was simply based on the fact that her son only gave monosyllabic answers to questions. He was seen by a counsellor in 2019 and again Jane asked CAMHS for an assessment ...after much chasing she and her son attended the Epsom facility and his mental health was assessed. However, they refused to assess his ASD but did put him forward for an ADHD assessment which is pending....Jane is concerned that CAMHS are prevaricating as her son will be 18 in September and she will have to start over with the adult service.

Healthwatch Surrey Helpdesk

The impact of poor communication

However good the quality of care offered, poor communication can drive a wedge between services and people. This can lead to confusion, concern and distrust – and result in additional burdens on services as patients try to seek clarity, resolve issues or correct errors:

- My doctor confused me about what to do when I have chest pain, they suggested I wait 45minutes and then to call the surgery if I have pain. It happened and I called the receptionist and she told me to call 999. The paramedics told me to call 999 if I have more than 20mins chest pain, which is what I will do now. I don't know why I was told something different by the Dr I saw at the practice.

Community engagement, Day centre

- I got a letter from my consultant in January that seemed to think I should be on some diuretic medication, but I don't think I need to be. I'm a bit confused as I hadn't anything before this. They didn't give me any information about this when I was discharged. I'm not sure what I'm supposed to be doing now.

Community engagement, Foodbank 2

- My GP noticed some difference in strength between the left and the right leg so he referred me to St Peter's for an emergency scan. After my scan, I was waiting in the cubicle by myself then I overheard the doctor outside talking about my CT scan and that it was normal. Then it went quiet for hours. No one came to talk to me.

Community engagement, BAME community group

- She had an appointment at Frimley Hospital. When she arrived, she found out that the appointment had been cancelled. The appt was at 11.00 but she called cancelling it arrived at 10.15 when she was on the way to the hospital (it was left on her home answering machine). The consultant called and left a message on her answering machine but failed to hang up properly so she was able to hear the doctor making disparaging remarks about her to the nurses.

Healthwatch Surrey Helpdesk

- The letters sent by the hospital are quite complex. The way they are worded can seem quite threatening and our [learning disabled service users] can feel like they've done something wrong. Customers always need the help of a carer or parent to help them understand what's happening.

Community Engagement, Project Zoom

Access to dentistry – health inequality at its most blunt

We continue to hear from people desperate to find an NHS dental service. Their only barrier to good dental care is money – private services are readily available in Surrey, and we rarely hear of any other systemic barriers to dental care.

We have written to our local MPs to highlight what we are hearing locally, and draw their attention to our recent report on [Dentistry](#), and to Healthwatch England's national report ([Lack of NHS dental appointments widens health inequalities | Healthwatch](#))

- I have been very unwell and just started to get back to some kind of normal life... I have tried pretty much every dentist I can find on Google locally and none are accepting new NHS clients. I have a disability and now unable to work so just rely on disability benefits for our income so I just can't afford to pay for a private dentist.

Healthwatch Surrey Helpdesk

- I'm struggling to find an NHS dentist in my local area. I'm pregnant and need urgent care as I've developed pain around one tooth. ... As a freelancer the pandemic has hit me hard financially and I really need to find an affordable solution to dental care at this point in time.

Healthwatch Surrey Helpdesk

- She is concerned that her dental surgery in Guildford shut without warning and she and her family have been left without a dentist. CI says her daughter has some toothache and she wishes to receive help for her. ...No other local practices are taking on NHS patients – those that might do not seem to reply to ansaphone messages. Will our dental records be available to any new dentist we might find, as per GP records?

Healthwatch Surrey Helpdesk

Sir Robert Francis QC to step down as Healthwatch England chair and from the Care Quality Commission Board

Sir Robert Francis has announced his decision to step down from his role as the Chair of the Healthwatch England Committee, as well as his role as non-executive director of the Care Quality Commission.

In his resignation letter Sir Robert remarked on the value of the patient voice, but lamented the reduction in funding to Healthwatch organisations:

"It has been a great pleasure to support Healthwatch England, the Committee and its dedicated staff in bringing the voice and experience of patients and service users to the table to inform national and local decisions about health and social care provision. I believe HWE has proved its worth to your department and the system more generally and is now in an ideal position to take forward your agenda for improving the patient's voice. It is quite clear to me from my own experience of listening to those voices that they often hold

the key to knowledge about what is going wrong and what changes should be made.

“However, if I have one regret about my time as chair it is that we have been unable as yet to find a way of reversing the alarming decline in the resources available to Healthwatch – I am afraid there is a growing risk the network will be unable to fulfil its vital role unless urgent attention is paid to this issue.”

Healthwatch Surrey Insight

We gather feedback through many channels including our agenda-free outbound engagement events, our Helpdesk, website, and social media. We also distribute flyers, advertise, engage with groups through our partners and contacts, and initiate focus groups.

Our engagement strategy for 2022-2023 focuses on **visiting community places and groups**. Each month the engagement team is out and about in a different area of Surrey visiting a hospital, GP and community settings such as; day centres; foodbanks; community cafes and groups.



We are also starting a **series of care home visits**, which will see us visiting one care home per month. We will gather views and opinions of residents, their families and friends and staff; these will be used to identify and share good practice and, if required, help suggest improvements to care homes across Surrey. Our survey for friends and family of those living in care homes can be accessed via this QR code



Our annual workplan was recently approved by our Board in public. If you are interested in reading more, it's available here: [Local Healthwatch work plan 2022/23](#)

The number of people we hear from and the topics we hear about varies from month to month. Some topics covered may depend on the groups we engage with.

If we hear a case of concern regarding patient safety we immediately signpost the sharer to the appropriate body and escalate the case with the provider/commissioner.

We share our wider themes with Trusts, CCGs, Surrey County Council, Public Health, CQC, and in various boards and groups across Surrey.

If there is a topic you would like to hear more about, please contact kate.scribbins@healthwatchesurrey.co.uk

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