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# Insight Bulletin

June 2023

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## About Healthwatch Surrey

One of the statutory duties of Healthwatch Surrey is to share Surrey residents' experiences of health and social care with the people and organisations who make decisions about those services. This report aims to highlight the topics that people have shared with Healthwatch Surrey in the past month.

If you would like a paper copy of this document or require it in an alternative format, please get in touch with us.

## Praise and thanks

We hear from a wide range of people who are very happy with the care and support they have received.

The staff have been lovely here [East Surrey Hospital]. They have kept me informed at every stage of my treatment. I have been to other hospitals too [for treatment for cancer] and I can't find fault with any of them. **192780, Community Engagement, Hospital**

In terms of the experience at Frimley, pre and post my baby, they were brilliant. **192852, Community Engagement, Family Centre**

The midwives were amazing. My son measured small so they were doing lots of extra monitoring and screening which reassured me. During the C- Section, the epidural didn't work

down one side. The anaesthetist was on it and rectified which was fine. **192853, Community Engagement, Family Centre**

Would you please pass on my sincere thanks to the staff who have been looking after my dear friend, since he was admitted as an emergency. Since entering St. Peter's he has received the attention he so badly needed from medical staff. Whenever I have phoned for an update, whoever I spoke with has been open and honest, within the bounds of the Data Protection Act. I have been assured when he is responding to new drugs and advised on the next course of action/tests to be carried out, when he isn't.

Please thank all those involved in his recovery and assure them that ALL the staff - cleaners, porters, catering as well as medical - are doing a wonderful job, very much appreciated by family and friends. **193971, Healthwatch Surrey Helpdesk**

## Family support

Being able to access support in community settings is very important to many people including parents and carers of young children. Our Community Engagement Officers attended a Health visiting drop in at Surrey Heath Young People and Family Centre. The people we spoke to on the day were not all from the local area and had travelled to come to the clinic. At the same venue, parents experiencing isolation can also attend a support group to learn strategies to improve bonding and attachment. Many of the parents attending have experienced mental health issues, some have refused to engage with mental health services, but are willing to come along to the group for support.

On the day of our visit, we also heard directly from people who didn't feel particularly well supported post-partum:

The Health visiting team only came to see me once despite saying they would visit again. The second contact I had was by phone. I didn't feel the visit was very thorough, the health visitor was disengaged and disinterested in me. It felt like it

was purely a tick box exercise. I didn't have that connection you know. If I could change one thing and make my experience better, I wish I had said something and asked for a different health visitor but I didn't feel mentally strong enough to do that. It's hard when you are fragile at the time.

**192852, Community Engagement, Family Centre**

We also spoke to new parents who had had concerns about some of the care that they had received but had been reluctant to share these concerns with the providers:

Whilst in labour the midwife wanted to do a sweep but I asked please could you not due to the greater risk of infection. As my labour moved along, I asked for gas and air but the midwife refused saying she wouldn't give me any pain killers until she had done a sweep, even though I was having contractions close together. I relented and had the internal exam but felt pressurised into it.

The rest of the labour went smoothly but that part was very stressful. I didn't leave feedback, but I wanted to. I would have liked to have had more person-centred care. **193583, Community Engagement, Family Centre**

There are a few improvements [I can think of] to the care I received during labour. There were training students on the day, I didn't mind them being there, however, I had to have a canula put into my hand and one of the students did it, they blew a vein and there was blood spurting everywhere, it bothered me more about that than the labour all I could concentrate on during the labour was the pain from my swollen hand, which was so uncomfortable alongside the birth. They also did my stitches, which took absolutely ages, I understand they wanted to get it right, but I think they chose me to train on because I had a straightforward pregnancy, but I just needed that part to be over. I didn't think to feedback about the trainee, as overall though, like I said I thought the care was good overall and the labour ward was brilliant. I did feel the students were supervised, and I

understand everyone needs to learn, but it just created an uncomfortable experience for me, it was dramatic at the time, blood spurting everywhere.

Post labour though the ward was awful, dribbly shower and bathrooms which were very dirty... I appreciate budgets, but having a shower after childbirth is a big deal and having to do it in a dirty bathroom is not good. I didn't feedback, I just wanted to get out as quickly as possible and luckily, I was only in overnight, I was moved on to the ward at about 9pm and out the next day by lunchtime. 193590, **Community Engagement, Family Centre**

## Access to Primary Care

Despite significant improvements in access to GP services being made, and more being planned, inconsistencies in how to access general practice and the consequences for patients continues to be one of the topics we hear about most frequently:

I have been having a lot of issues accessing support from my GP with regards to my complex chronic illnesses... They have also taken the phone off the hook for a week, so people could not call through. 192402, **Healthwatch Surrey Helpdesk**

I called GP surgery and relayed [my issues] to the receptionist... They suggested as my GP was not back until Monday as on holiday, to call following Monday. I called up [and spoke to] the same receptionist but her response was "No, you can only call at 8am on the day to see a doctor." I said oh what has happened to the online form, what time does that get switched on? "No, after our last partner's meeting, we decided we have done away with the online appointment request function now, everyone has to call. You may have to constantly re-dial and wait. That is the only way." 194137, **Healthwatch Surrey Feedback Centre**

Impossible to get hold of the practice. The online forms close at 11:00 and telephone is not answered for over 30 minutes

on every occasion I call. Results of a test for a child that supposed to take 3-4 days not given in 3 weeks plus. Results of a test for an adult not provided at all. Impossible to get hold of the surgery. Absolute shambles. Every time I raise this with them they just shrug and say they are busy. **194105, Healthwatch Surrey Feedback Centre**

## Community pharmacy

People are experiencing the consequences of shortages of medications and the impact of recent closures.

Boots have taken on all of the prescriptions from the Lloyds pharmacy that used to be in Sainsburys. This has led to the store itself being so full of stock, that the staff and customers cannot move safely around the store. It has also led to wait times of 1 hour plus for medication, and even more shortages of medications and the pharmacy is having to shut for a couple of hours a day, so the staff can keep up with the demand that they are now trying to meet. **192700, Healthwatch Surrey Feedback Centre**

I tried to collect my HRT medication last week, having requested a repeat prescription from the GP. The pharmacist handed me half the medication with a "voucher" for Utrogestan as they were out of stock. They did not explain any implications of this process. I then started phoning round other pharmacies locally to find some but was told that even if they had stock of utrogestan, they would not be able to give it to me as once your original pharmacy have given you the "voucher", you cannot then get that medication elsewhere. I phoned the GP receptionist and was then told I had to go back to the GP to get a prescription for an alternative. Luckily I was able to fill out a request form rather than taking up a valuable appointment slot. When I went back to the same pharmacy to get the alternative medication, another woman was having exactly the same conversation with the pharmacist and was very

surprised to find out that if she wanted to go elsewhere for part of her prescription, the only way to do this was to refuse the whole lot from Boots and start again somewhere else. This makes me question: 1) why are pharmacists not explaining this clearly to every customer who has a partially fulfilled prescription? It should be a standard wording for everyone. 2) Why is the GP prescribing a medication that is totally out of stock at the neighbouring pharmacy (and nationally) – thereby generating more admin and follow up in order to obtain a prescription for an alternative? **193505, Healthwatch Surrey Helpdesk**

## Experiences of Mental Health Crisis

We have heard what it can be like for people admitted to an acute hospital in a mental health crisis and the impact that not being in the most appropriate setting can have on people:

My friend is autistic and has poor mental health [and] is currently placed on the Acute Medical Unit, following a suicide attempt, where the police were called. She is currently on the waiting list to be transferred for inpatient mental health support, however we are having some issues with her care on the ward. She was only supposed to be there for 72 hours, however she has been there double that time due to the lack of beds for her elsewhere. The issues we are having are around the medications my friend has. She has been prescribed a sedative which is used to calm her down when she is on the brink of melt down. However, we have had issues with this being administered within a reasonable time frame, with my friend waiting 4-6 hours for it to be administered after she has said that she needs it... When my friend is in a meltdown, she shows suicidal tendencies, so they are difficult for her to experience and can be avoided if the medication is administered at the correct time. **194104, Healthwatch Surrey Helpdesk**

## Support for carers

A number of carers have approached our Helpdesk looking for advice and support:

I am desperately trying to find out why [in Surrey Downs, there] is not funding for the fantastic courses run by national mental health charities? My teenage daughter was diagnosed with Anorexia Nervosa [early] this year. I have tried to sign up to many courses organised by the national charity Beat, but have been told on multiple occasions that I am unable to access their support, as there is no funding in my area. I find this postcode lottery extremely disappointing and would like to know what can be done about it? In order to help support my daughter, I need to be supported as a carer and I currently do not feel that this is adequate, due to where I live. My daughter was also referred to Heads Together and Relate for counselling, but yet again, she was turned down because of where we live. This is a desperate situation for our young people who are really struggling with mental health issues. If you are able to advise as to what I can do and where I can turn for help with this, it would be much appreciated. **194092, Healthwatch Surrey Helpdesk**

My father is 80 years old and in poor health. He has just been sent home after stays in hospital... Now at home he has had several falls and accidents trying to get to the toilet. He struggles with getting in and out of the bath to have a shower. When he was discharged from hospital they said that someone would come to assess his home for equipment to help but this has not happened... My mum who is 78 herself is struggling to care for him on her own. They own their own house and have savings so assume that they won't get any help but I think he could qualify for attendance allowance. However, I think they will both struggle to fill out the forms and to get the evidence needed from the GP and hospital. Can you please advise me on how I can help them. **193630, Healthwatch Surrey Helpdesk**

My mum-in-law went to a nursing home in March after having delirium... Last Friday Social Services told us that she was coming home and would need transport. We explained to them we couldn't do it until the Friday. Monday morning [named social worker], phoned us up and told us she was coming home on Tuesday, I won't deny we were cross with them because they made the arrangements before telling us, I am actually her registered Carer, they had not dealt or involved us on much of anything at all, even when we tried telling them that she is at risk of falling especially at night and if she falls we won't hear her from upstairs. They would not listen to us, ask any details or any concerns we may have had or did a home assessment. It was a heated row.... I feel that you should be aware of the things that go on with our social services. **194094, Healthwatch Surrey Helpdesk**

## Who have we shared our insight 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 have shared our insight in the following meetings:

- Surrey Heartlands Quality, Performance and Assurance Committee (case study looking at mental health crisis support)
- Frimley ICS Quality Committee
- Surrey Heartlands Primary Care Access Board
- Surrey Heartlands System Quality Group (JIG) (Children's Services)
- Guildford & Waverley Alliance
- South East Coast Ambulance
- Practice Plus Group
- Surrey and Borders Partnership
- Shadow Co-production and Insight Group (CPIG) (Neurodiversity report)
- Healthwatch England



Our spotlight for engagement sessions in June was Surrey Heath.



In July we will be in North West Surrey.

Date	Place	Time	Surrey Area
09.07.23	<b>Burpham Wellfest</b> , Sutherland Memorial Park, Burpham (Public)	10.00–18.00	Guildford & Waverley
12.07.23	<b>Health Visitors 'drop in' Clinic</b> , Eastwood leisure centre, Sheerwater, Woking (Visitors to Clinic)	9.30 – 11.30	Northwest Surrey
15.07.23	<b>Ashford and St Peter's Hospitals' Community Open Day</b> , St Peter's Hospital (Public)	10.00–15.00	Northwest Surrey
TBC 17.07.23	<b>Staines Library</b> , Staines (Public)	10.00–12.00	Northwest Surrey
17.07.23	<b>Royal Surrey Hospital</b> , St Lukes, Café (Public)	10.00–12.00	Guildford & Waverley
19.07.23	<b>Hope Café</b> , St Johns, Egham (Public)	11.30–13.30	Northwest Surrey
19.07.23	<b>St John Ambulance presentation</b> , Guildford (Group Members)	19:30	Surrey wide
20.07.23	<b>Community Food bank 'The Haven' and Community Lunch</b> , St Saviours, Sunbury (Group Members)	10.30–12.30	Northwest Surrey

Please note: these dates may be subject to change.

To share an experience with us, people can also contact our Helpdesk in the following ways:

Phone: 0303 303 0023

SMS (text only): 07592 787 533

Email: [enquiries@healthwatchsurrey.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatchsurrey.co.uk)

Share your feedback via our website:

<https://www.healthwatchsurrey.co.uk/feedback-centre/>

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