

Insight Bulletin: July 2020

One of the statutory duties of Healthwatch Surrey is to listen to the views of local people about their health and social care and to share these views with the organisations who make decisions about local services.

This bulletin highlights some themes we have heard about in the past few weeks. Our engagement is agenda-free: people tell us about the experiences that have affected them in their own words. This bulletin is a small sample of what people have shared with us - if there is something you would like to hear more about please contact Kate.Scribbins@healthwatchesurrey.co.uk.

In a snap poll we ran in June one of the main messages people wanted to pass on to health and social care workers was 'Thank You'. We continue to hear stories from happy service users who have experienced excellent care and are happy to be able to share these positive experiences as well as some more challenging themes.

Praise and thanks

"We have been so grateful for the excellent help we have received from Adult Services, and also from the Occupational Therapist... All the equipment has been installed promptly by Millbrook... On the financial side xxx has been a great help sorting out paperwork and applying for funding on our behalf..."

"St Peters A&E need a pat on the back. I have attended twice this year and have been blown away by how efficient they have been"

"I contacted my GP online; I received a telephone call from a GP within 3 hours of submitting the form. She discussed the problem with me and arranged to see me the following day, and I was then referred to a consultant dermatologist. About three days later I was contacted by the outpatient schedulers and offered a choice of where I could be seen. A telephone consultation was arranged. The appointment was confirmed by email and I was asked to submit photos for the consultant to view. The consultant phoned me at the appointed time"

People and their carers are suffering the impact of cancelled activities

The impact of cancelled activities is being felt by both carers and those they care for, and the detriment is physical as well as emotional:

“It is exhausting at the best of times. Lockdown has been hard because her day centre closed and routine changed, which made her dementia worsen steadily”.

“I am carer for my disabled sister, who before the lockdown was receiving social care activities 5 days a week, and respite was being organised for me (I have my own severe health issues). When lockdown was announced this activity stopped...me and my husband are exhausted and unsupported, we struggle to find activities for my sister to do and have no idea what support we can get.”

“ALL DAY CENTRES were told to close. I do understand and want to keep people safe...my daughter is mid 20’s...has Cerebral Palsy, epilepsy, severe learning disabilities, blindness, and moderate deafness... This very much concerns my husband and I, as she is having more fits, due to lots of stress, and this is not good for her. She needs routines as also has autistic traits in her behaviour, and so change is not something she copes very well with, at all... Please we do NEED help with this.”

Lack of hospital visiting can cause physical as well as emotional detriment

Inability to visit or accompany hospital patients is distressing, but can also compromise quality of care:

“Her husband’s dietician also has recommended that her husband eats ‘little and often’ (ideally 5 or 6 small meals a day) but he is only being offered breakfast, lunch and dinner. When she asked about this she was told ‘it’s a shame you can’t visit as you would be able to provide the small meals or snacks during the day’.”

“We [support charity] have two patients...who went to hospital to be given their diagnosis and they were all alone - they were told they had end stage cancer, one breast cancer and the other bowel cancer...imagine being given the news you have cancer and having to face that on your own! We always recommend people take a supporter

even if they just take notes, so much can be missed during a stressful conversation”

“[The hospital made] a terrible misdiagnosis and told him he would die in next few hours and called all of us over... it was wrong, based on poor information as family not allowed to A&E”

Lack of access to dental care is an ongoing theme

Lack of access to dentistry can have significant consequences that will impact on access to other services as they resume:

“I need a repeat X-ray by dentist before I can have my zoledronic acid infusion to give me the all-clear and this can’t be done... Dentist not open so cancer prevention treatment delayed. I would like to have been able to finish my zoledronic acid infusions as they are to prevent cancer recurrence. The Oncologist wasn’t very reassuring”¹

But we are also seeing a resurgence of routine difficulties in finding an NHS dentist in Surrey:

“I’m really struggling to find an NHS dentist, I’m not currently registered anywhere as I suffered with bad anxiety so hadn’t been to a dentist for over 10 years. I’m now not as bad as I was but my teeth are a mess and to top it off, I have managed to snap my front tooth I’m desperate to find an NHS dentist near me”

“I have a cavity which I have been patching with temporary filling since lockdown, I have called 5 local dentists, but they are not currently taking on NHS patients”

Surrey GP website survey – nearly all Surrey GPs displaying clear information

In May and June our Healthwatch volunteers visited 128 Surrey GP websites to review information about COVID-19 and the appointments process. We were very pleased to see that nearly all GP websites offered clear and comprehensive information: where there were information gaps we fed back to the surgeries and to the commissioners for further review.

For more information please contact us at enquiries@healthwatchesurrey.co.uk.

¹ We are aware this patient’s clinical understanding was not correct but their inability to access dental services was impacting their overall healthcare

How we gather our insight

Social distancing has prevented us from carrying out our usual face-to-face engagement, but we have been actively seeking experiences through our contacts, our partners and online

- Reminding people they can share their experiences with Healthwatch via Citizens Advice, telephone, and our feedback form on our website.
- Distributed 700 copies of a new flyer via community foodbanks.
- Launched a survey on paper and online, including an easy read version
- Keeping in touch with our Healthwatch volunteers, partner organisations and VCFS contacts
- We actively collate responses to local stories in the media
- Many partner organisations have replaced face-to-face meetings with online meetings, and our engagement team attend a number of these every week

Where we share our insight

If we hear any cases of particular concern regarding patient safety, we share these with the relevant provider/commissioner straight away.

We share our wider themes with CCGs, Adult Social Care, Public Health, CQC, and in various boards and groups across Surrey.

Thanks

We would like to thank all health, care and support staff who are working so hard to keep Surrey safe and supported during the Coronavirus outbreak. Much of the feedback we've heard has been positive and a key message we hear is 'please say thank you'. We hope that our insight as the weeks go on will help to inform recovery in our local area.

Please contact kate.scribbins@healthwatchsurrey.co.uk if you would like any further information.