

Board Report – Thematic Priorities and Project Development November 2020

Background

Every year Healthwatch Surrey deliver four projects, one each under a three-year Thematic Priority. New priorities are selected based on a combination of what we are hearing, our staff and volunteer priorities, and system drivers such as the Surrey Health and Wellbeing Board focus areas.

Status

Previous projects:

We have recently completed work on two thematic priorities that were initiated in 2016: Care Homes and Hospital Discharge. (Unfortunately the pandemic interrupted delivery of the final Hospital Discharge report).

Focus during the pandemic:

The first six months of the pandemic demanded an agile approach: our partners needed topical insight and we responded with fast and frequent output. Our survey on the impact of coronavirus on experiences of health and social care was reported in May, well before our partners' own surveys, and we have just circulated our sixth Insight Bulletin since April. Our output has been well received.

At the same time, following well-received reports under our Care Home and Care at Home priorities we have been involved in the development of Surrey Heartlands' End of Life Strategy and with the new SCC Domiciliary Care contract.

We have been challenging our system partners around Digital Exclusion since the very early days of the pandemic. It is a problem that remains unsolved and we are considering what resource we should dedicate to it to enable better understanding and quick solutions.

New projects under existing priorities:

While we remain responsive to emerging issues over the winter we are in early stage development of projects on our ongoing Thematic Priorities. Both these projects will have an Outreach arm - we will ensure the relevant outreach priority groups are sampled and reported separately for each project.

- **Mental Health - Exploring the lived experience of people and their carers living with mild dementia in the early years after diagnosis.** In Surrey people with a diagnosis are discharged with no planned followup from primary or secondary care. All too often they only become visible to the system again at a point of crisis - carer breakdown, physical deterioration or a social care emergency. The Surrey Heartlands Dementia Strategy Board are keen to develop insight into this phase of people's journey to help avert crisis and maximise safe, independent living for families with a dementia diagnosis.
- **Care at Home - The value of Day Centres for Older Residents.** Surrey County Council fund activities and personal care services for older residents that are delivered outside the home. These range across personal care, enablement and social engagement such as bathing, lunches, social activities, exercise classes and information events. Services funded by Surrey are only a small proportion of the overall provision and there is a view that SCC provision is dated compared to the innovation and user-responsive offers seen in the VCSF sector. SCC are reviewing their provision, and we will be partnering with them to undertake service user engagement to understand what service users want and value in this area.

New Priority Development is on hold

While we currently have only two agreed Thematic Priorities we are not working on development of new priorities:

- Earlier this year we convened a Priority Action Group. We agreed that in future we should aim for just three Thematic Priorities, leaving resource available for one project per year relating to an emerging issue.
- We expect the Dementia and Day Centre projects to run at least until the end of this financial year
- As well as the short term impact on healthcare, the pandemic will have a profound impact on long term service delivery and funding - but quite what this will look like is hard to predict. When we have a clearer view of a post-pandemic landscape we will restart priority development.