

Board Report – Thematic Priorities and Project Development January 2021

Summary

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.

Inevitably the pandemic has disrupted this year’s plans and continues to do so. Since the last board meeting the second wave has escalated, impacting progress on our planned projects. We have had to remain responsive and agile, and have continued with our monthly Insight Bulletins which deliver fast insight on emerging issues and key themes. We have also delivered a very successful commissioned project and started work on a further collaborative project.

Our current workload is:

Immediate/ongoing	Monthly Insight Bulletin Carer’s Discharge Project Older Person’s Day Care project
Slower burn	Early experiences of Dementia Priority Action Group

Projects under Existing Priorities

Care at Home - Older People’s Day Centres

Surrey County Council approached us for help developing and undertaking service user engagement to understand the value and opportunities for day centres in Surrey, as part of their review of provision. With the second wave forcing closure of day centres it has been hard to progress this project, but SCC are hosting a survey

which went live on 18th January and we will be undertaking telephone depth interviews with day centre users to complement this survey over the coming weeks.

Mental Health - living with dementia in the early years after diagnosis.

Successful delivery of this project depends on our ability to access people living with dementia. We planned to join dementia groups such as dementia cafes and day centres to carry out interviews and encourage the sharing of experiences and stories. Unfortunately the second wave has made this impossible. However, during Q3 we have spoken to key stakeholders and delivery staff such as GPs and Dementia Navigators to ensure we understand the landscape and can deliver meaningful insight. In particular we have researched BAME contacts to inform the Outreach arm of this project.

Future Priorities

Although we are overdue development of a new priority, we agreed to put priority development on hold until we have a clearer view of the post-pandemic landscape. At the start of Q3 we expected to be able to start planning now but at the time of writing our Surrey hospitals have higher Covid admissions than during the first wave and may not have reached peak admissions yet: at the same time Covid vaccinations have been offered to all over 80s and healthcare staff, and we are just beginning to move to the next two vaccination cohorts.

We recommend we tentatively plan to reconvene the Priority Action Group early in the new financial year.

Other Outputs

Insight Bulletin

The bulletin is now sent monthly to over 800 stakeholders. The original ambition was to provide fast feedback on emerging issues in the early days of the pandemic. Recently what we're hearing has become more consistent month to month, but the bulletin has remained topical and varied. We always include positive feedback, and the December bulletin was deliberately positive as a thank you to our partners for all their work over the past year, and a morale boost for the months ahead.

We are reviewing the future of the Bulletin. Soft feedback indicates it's well received and benefits our credibility and our salience, but the landscape has changed since its introduction.

Downing St GP Practice Relocation - ensuring the patient voice contributes to decisionmaking around the new practice location

In early November we were approached by the CCG and Downing St practice to gather patient views on two very different approaches to relocation of the practice. Time was very tight - results were needed in early December when the final decision was expected to be made.

We designed a survey which the practice sent out on their text messaging service to 8,000 patients, and 1,100 responded. To offset the bias towards the digitally savvy we also undertook 23 telephone interviews with older, more frequent surgery users (selected and pre-recruited by the practice). Volunteers helped with phone interviews and some aspects of analysis of the survey. Full results and a written report were presented to stakeholders on 14th December 2020.

The project was commissioned by the CCG: our time and costs were well within estimates, and we received positive feedback from all stakeholders.

Carer's experiences of Hospital Discharge during the Pandemic

We are just beginning a project that will be part funded by Action for Carers. Early in the pandemic hospital discharge processes were changed to ensure people with no clinical need to be in hospital were discharged as soon as possible. A Healthwatch England survey indicated both positive and negative patient experiences as a result of the changes.

The new discharge-to-assess processes are very likely to continue permanently. The impact of swift discharge is often felt by (unpaid) carers who may be expected to receive the person being cared for with little advance notice and a temporary care package, and who have to cope with any failures in equipment or medication delivery.

Action for Carers wish to understand carers' experiences of discharge, in order to influence how it is implemented in the longer term. Healthwatch Surrey will be designing and running a survey including some depth interviews, and this is expected to report in May/June 2021.