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# Insight Bulletin - June 2022

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## 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:

"I had a stroke early this year - I had an excellent service from the ambulance, from the doctors [at Epsom], everyone looked after me - it was superb. My GP have been really supportive. I find that if you write them a letter, it gives them time to review your information and then get back to you appropriately. I do that and it works well. They get back to me a few days later. I get appointments both in person and over the phone. Very happy with the care I receive"

**Community engagement, Acute Hospital**

"No faults found here whatsoever, the staff have time for me, anything is doable. They are lovely people who listen and have time for me. I don't think there is anything that can be improved. The care is brilliant, first class and I have my own room, I haven't ever been in a set up like this"

**Community Engagement, Community Hospital**

This month we'd also like to thank some of the unsung heroes and those who go the extra mile:

"I was being abused by husband and I didn't know where to go. I don't speak English so well so it was difficult. I went to the GP and they were brilliant. They sorted an Arabic translator, they helped get me to a refuge. The GP saved me"

**Refugee Engagement**

“My daughter called 111 and then an ambulance came, they extricated me from the bathroom and I was put to bed by the ambulance staff.

Very good”

**Community engagement, Community Centre**

“Since joining Action for Carers yoga, I have found it so beneficial to my own health – physical and mental. It has helped me feel calm, less stressed out and able to cope better. I have my own health problems to manage on top of caring for someone and this one hour a week helps me relieve the tension in my own body and feel able to face the week ahead”

**Inbound email**

“Direct payments give my son the chance to choose his activities and gives us respite. The flexibility works well for us all. We all benefit from the service in a positive way”

**Facebook**

## Our Waiting for hospital care report

We have just published this report. Our research shines a light on the experiences of people waiting for appointments and treatment, including information and support received while waiting. While not an audit, we hope the insight from this research will guide actions that can minimise the impact of delayed treatment on the health and wellbeing of those waiting.

The full report is available on our website – [Waiting for hospital care - June 2022.pdf](#). Our key findings are:

- **Waiting is worrying; even short waits are often perceived negatively,** and after a 5 month wait 4/5 waiters felt negatively about their wait and/or had experienced negative effects
- **Healthcare information and safety netting is inconsistent.** Most who spoke to us told us they had not received information about managing their condition or been given contact should their condition worsen; only a minority felt the information they had received was helpful
- **Information about “my” waiting status would relieve stress and worry.** Uncertainty is a stressor. 2/3 felt the hospital should update them regularly on the likely length of their wait

We have asked the hospitals to respond to the recommendations our report makes:

Overall – **is the health of the people on your waiting lists being actively managed, or is it a hiatus in their care?**

1. Review processes to ensure all patients are given the **information, advice, contacts and signposting** they need to stay well and minimise deterioration while waiting
2. **Communicate with patients regularly** to reduce stress, improve trust, and reduce timewasting inbound queries

The responses will be published later in the year.

## Misuse of A&E – not just a patient problem

Our local hospitals are struggling with high A&E attendances and patients are experiencing long waits for treatment and admission. Inappropriate presentations are a problem, and some people tell us they have used A&E as an alternative to their GP.

“I called my GP and explained and they couldn't give me an appointment for 3 weeks...so I took the bus to A&E @ Epsom. They saw me quickly and were very thorough and gave me an ECG”

**Primary Care Extended Access Engagement**

“In one case, she received a phone call from the surgery; she said she found the individual was not medically trained to understand her condition. In the end, she went to A&E to receive treatment”

**Community engagement, Medical Centre**

“Her own GP only works three days a week so there have been occasions when she has not been seen by the doctor for weeks and, she said, needed to go to A&E instead”

**Community engagement, Hospital**

“Luckily I am confident but I tell people who don't have an advocate, you have to exaggerate if going to A&E or you'll be turned away”

**Primary Care Extended Access Engagement**

However, we have also heard of GP surgeries directing patients to A&E when there will be long waits for GP appointments:

"I recently phoned [my GP] for my 5 month old who had constipation. Was told it was a 4 week wait to see the GP! Told if I was concerned that I should go to A&E. ... Also concerned C sec not healing- told no [GP] appointments and to go to A&E"

**Community engagement , Foodbank**

"On a couple of occasions recently I've required to see the doctors for either myself or my children and have been turned away and told to go to A&E or ring 111"

**Community engagement, GP Surgery**

"My husband ... needed antibiotics. He ... spoke to the GP receptionist last week [when he called, he was 27th in the queue]. They told him they had no appointments and to go to A&E or offered him an appointment at [alternative surgery] in 4 day's time. No signposting to Urgent Treatment Centre or anything else. I spoke to him and said you are not going to A&E that is wasting staff time and totally unnecessary and wrong information"

**Primary Care Extended Access Engagement**

## **Not everyone is online – or ever will be**

It is important that non-digital access routes to healthcare do not become the poor cousin to digital access.

Digital processes have improved access to primary care for many and we welcome the ongoing drive to streamline design to make technology more intuitive and user-friendly.

However, we do hear from people struggling with online access. We recognise that online access will never be a viable option for many, and those without digital access are often those most in need of healthcare.

"It's hard to even locate their phone number on their website. And therefore you are pushed to use their online portal and I don't like using the computer. I have a SMART phone but I rely on husband to help which takes time out of his day to help me. I don't mind getting a text from the

surgery. ... They don't want you to call but make online access so hard. It isn't for everyone. It's such hard work. Repeat prescriptions are a big problem. You are unable to organise them without using online -how can this be ok for people like me or the elderly?"

**Primary Care Extended Access Engagement**

"I have access to the internet but I don't know how to use it all. I google [GP surgery] and go from there. My English friend helped me [use the online form] last time but I'm not sure I could do it again"

**Refugee Engagement**

"In terms of access to my GP; [surgery] does seem to be getting better although you still have to wait ages to get through on the phone. I do have the internet, but we were born too early for this - we simply can't do it, it's too stressful"

**Community engagement, Community Cafe**

"I came in today to make an appointment. I am not very good with computers as I am [Age 80's] so I do find the system now more difficult to make an appointment. Pre-COVID I thought the systems were manageable. I did try to register for the online service, but we have one computer at home and my wife registered and then it couldn't register two people from the same computer"

**Community engagement, GP Surgery**

## Gathering and sharing our insight

We gather feedback through many channels including our agenda-free outbound engagement events, our Helpdesk, website, and social media. We are also continuing our **series of care home visits**, which will see us visiting one care home each month. We also distribute flyers, advertise, engage with groups through our partners and contacts, and initiate focus groups.

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.



Our spotlight for engagements in July is Guildford and Waverley, in August we will be focussing on East Surrey.

Please note: these may be subject to change.

DATE	PLACE	Time
12.07.22	Godalming and Villages Community Store and Fridge (Farncombe)	10.00 - 12.00
14.07.22	Merrow Park GP Surgery (Guildford)	10.00 - 12.00
18.07.22	Haslewey Community Centre (Haslemere)	10.00 - 12.00
26.07.22 (TBC)	Brownscombe House Nursing Home (Enter and View Visit tbc)	10:30 - 12:30
02.08.22	East Surrey Hospital	10.00 - 11.30
05.08.22	St Matthews Foodbank, Redhill	11.30 - 2.00
09.08.22	Wayside Surgery, Horley	10.00 - 12.00
09.08.22	Greathed Manor care Home, Lingfield (Enter and View Visit)	10.30 - 12.30
10.08.22	Merstham Community Hub, Merstham	12.00 - 3.00
15.08.22	Caterham Dene Community Hospital (Minor Injuries)	10.00 - 12.00

We are also attending Burpham Wellbeing Festival on the 17<sup>th</sup> July.

## Friends and Family Care Home Survey

Our survey for friends and family of those living in care homes can be accessed via this QR code or found on our website - [Friends and family care home survey - Healthwatch Surrey](#).



**Friends and Family  
Care Home Survey**



**healthwatch**  
Surrey

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