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# Insight Bulletin

February 2024

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“The situation for local people is untenable and needs to be looked at urgently. Many who require the services of the pharmacy do not have the flexibility to keep going back!!!”



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

This bulletin is designed to highlight the themes we have been hearing about and includes quotes from local people to provide context on these themes. This month we have been hearing about:

- [Staff interactions providing a positive experience](#)
- [General Practice, mixed opinions](#)
- [Pharmacy First?](#)
- [What good care means to patients in hospital](#)
- [Young people not getting the support they need](#)

Whilst this bulletin accurately reflects what we hear from the individuals we speak to, we are aware that it may not be representative of everyone's views of a particular service. Multiple references to a specific service may be due to where our community engagement has recently taken place.

Any urgent or concerning experiences within this report have been escalated to the appropriate teams. All appropriate information and signposting to complaints processes has already been given.

If you would like more information or examples of what people have shared, please get in touch with us.

## **Staff interactions providing a positive experience**

Last month we received 93 reports of people's health and social care experiences. We frequently hear from people who are very happy with the care and support they have received and often tell us that the caring nature of individuals has a big impact on their overall experience:

"I was here today for an ultrasound... I brought my twin sister with me for support as I've been so anxious. The lady that did the scan was able to tell me straight away that it was ok and totally reassured me. The staff here are so nice and caring."  
**208318, Waverley resident**

"Our [GP] surgery is very good and supportive. Brilliant care."  
**208319, Farnham resident**

"I was referred for an endoscopy appointment. The process from booking an appointment through to the actual consultation has been quick and seamless, staff were helpful, respectful and polite and the whole process has been efficient. I cannot find fault."  
**207420, Runnymede resident**

"The "Mama's line" was fantastic and was very useful for me as a first time mum, to ensure that I was able to get advice when I needed it around baby's movements, and later in my pregnancy, my blood pressure.

The community midwives were amazing, and ensured that I was always referred to specialists when needed. For

example they made sure I was referred to the anaesthetists to discuss pain relief, and also referred me to the perinatal health team, for an assessment, due to my past mental health experiences. We also saw the same midwife most check ups, which was really appreciated and worked well for me and my partner.”

**207530, Waverley resident**

## General Practice, mixed opinions

For many, General Practice (services available at a GP practice) is the first port of call when people have health concerns and is an area we hear more about than anything else. People’s thoughts and experiences about the service they receive continues to vary considerably.

For this person, almost everything is as good as it can be:

“I have always had positive experiences with my GP practice. I find it very easy to book an appointment and always find the care received helpful and delivered in a compassionate and caring way. The GPs I have seen have always been professional and executed excellent professional medical advice and care. Dr [Name] in particular and the Practice Nurse go beyond what I expect and often ask about other health issues not related to what I’m presenting with. I am happy with how to book appointments although it’s not very clear how to access my medical records. I have requested this several times and was told I need to fill out a consent form but they didn’t have any. I’m still trying to follow this up but don’t feel it is a priority. The waiting area is always kept clean and there is always helpful information available. I regularly receive texts to book appointments for follow ups and annual health checks/diabetic checks. This is a useful way of communicating.” **207801, Guildford resident**

However, this resident from Surrey Heath has decided to access care privately following frustrating experiences with their GP practice:

“GP care is non-existent. You can’t get face to face appointments easily, you have to exaggerate your symptoms to be seen. I haven’t seen the doctor I’m registered with for years, if I do get an appointment it’s always a locum who knows nothing about my medical history. Mental health care is awful, if you need any long term help apart from medication it’s at least a 6 month wait. I now pay for private medical care.”

**206339, Surrey Heath resident**

## Pharmacy First?

The [NHS Pharmacy First](#) advanced service launched on 31 January 2024. According to NHS England there were 9800 consultations on the first day of the scheme. The scheme promises to make it easier for patients to access treatment. Healthwatch England have called for the public to be able to easily find up-to-date information on which of their local pharmacies is providing the service. Locally, we’ve begun to hear already how local people are experiencing the launch:

“My daughter phoned the GP practice to make an appointment for itching and fatigue, she was told someone would ring back, she then got a text saying the medical team would review her, then a text saying “you have been referred to [Named] Pharmacy, the pharmacist might contact you if you don’t attend for a consultation” then an ID number. Not clear what the next step is so she popped into the practice to ask. They said it’s all very new and they are not really sure themselves but they think she should get a text from pharmacy with an appointment, however they did say that yesterday the pharmacy told them they were not partaking in this scheme, but today they are! So we wait, pretty sure daughter needs a blood test which will mean a re-referral back to the GP practice. Find this whole process worrying as a big window for delayed diagnosis and treatment for a lot of people.”

The feeling persists amongst some that seeing a pharmacist is not as good as seeing a GP, which shows the importance of building trust and confidence:

“Very unsafe approach, patient health under the risk. My husband recently had increased blood pressure, he is a cardiovascular patient with mechanical valve and after emergency dissection type A... GP refused his phone appointment and instead passed him onto our local pharmacist so he can review his medication if there is need of anything to be increased. How safe is this for this patient with complex illness? The pharmacist called him and prescribed Neofel XL 2.5 mg on top of other different blood pressure medications.”

**207807, Epsom and Ewell resident**

Elsewhere, we continue to hear about the pressures on local services which is having a significant impact on people’s ability to get medication they require.

“Could you please do something to improve the awful situation we now find ourselves in with regard to pharmacy access. The Boots chemist which we normally use... used to be an excellent service and support. However, it has become increasingly busy since the Lloyds facility in Sainsbury’s, closed and is now totally unable to cope as [another nearby branch] has now closed. My husband who is [in his 80s] has a prescription to pick up but has been twice and the queue is so long he’s unable to wait as he cannot stand for long. In addition, he is claustrophobic so as it’s so crowded in there this is also not manageable. I have been to look 3 times in the last week to pick up for him but each time the queue has been excessive. We’re not at the totally urgent stage yet so hoping to find a quieter slot as I really don’t want to catch anything by queuing!! I have also now registered for prescriptions to be delivered.”

**207832, Guildford resident**

“I am an unpaid carer. My wife is on morphine. I do repeat prescriptions for her. It takes 5 days from getting it signed off by the doctor. I purposely time it that I come here on a Monday morning when it's quiet. Fridays are awful, the queue of people out the door gets to double figures!!! Two Llyod closures have meant more people are coming here, but yet there is only one person dispensing today, it's ridiculous.

The situation for local people is however untenable and needs to be looked at urgently. Many who require the services of the pharmacy do not have the flexibility to keep going back!!!”

**208368, Farnham resident**

## What good care means to patients in hospital

From what people tell us about being treated in hospital, there are usually things they are thankful for, alongside having ideas about how things could have been better for them. Interactions with staff are key in shaping the patient's experience, as in this example:

“During my stay I had extensive investigations and when admitted to the ward I generally had excellent care given. Staff spoke and treated me with both respect and dignity. In the past I have received negative responses due to mental health diagnosis but during this admission I felt that was respected and I was treated fairly, regardless of my diagnosis.”

**207800, Guildford resident**

In the last few weeks people have been in contact via Healthwatch England to tell us that their experience has been negatively impacted by lack of food and drink and uncomfortable conditions in some Surrey hospitals:

“I had to stay in hospital for a few days recently. After waiting 10 hours for a bed (with no drinks or food offered) I was sent to a ward that was boiling hot, in a basement with windows

at ceiling level that literally opened less than 5 cm. Everyone in there like me was unwell. Impossible to sleep in the heat which was migraine inducing. The poor staff were also boiling, they said it was like that all the time in winter. It was hideous and made me feel a lot worse.”

**208890, Surrey resident shared with Healthwatch England**

“I was admitted at 02.53 hours. I was finally told that I would be discharged at about 20.30 hours... The care that I received was excellent except I was only given 1 paper cup of tea but I wasn't asked or given anything to eat at all.”

**209207, Surrey resident shared with Healthwatch England**

## Young people not getting the support they need

Recently, more people have been telling us they are concerned about the lack of support for young people they care for and do not have faith in the prospect of this improving:

“My granddaughter is currently living with me and my husband... It's a nightmare, I'm caring for her but I'm exhausted and frustrated. She has lots of mental health issues and is on the waiting list to be assessed by CAMHS for ADHD. Told it will be ages and ages. She turned 18 in December and all support ceased immediately. We didn't get a transition period or handover to adult social services. I really, really need help. I called beginning of January and explained and I've not heard anything back. She becomes so violent and unpredictable. She spends most of the day in bed and is awake all night causing us total disruption. She has tried to engage with services but it doesn't work for her so she leaves. I'm stressed literally all of the time.”

**207988, Surrey Heath resident**

“Parents of children who are waiting for ND assessments and CAMHS have been told that the waiting list for appointments has been closed; even if their child is already on the waiting list no new appointments are being issued. They have been

told that this is so that they can catch up with the backlog of appointments.

Parents have been told to keep checking the (presumably Mindworks) website to check when it is re-opened.”

**226350, Surrey Downs resident**

“My Child is diagnosed ADHD [Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder] also possible ASD [Autism Spectrum Disorder]. Had a mental health crisis but two weeks before I had tried to get support via CAMHS. They don't respond to emails for days nor messages left on the answer machine until the point that was reaching crisis and needing a duty clinician. Even then they didn't respond for 4 days and I called 3 more times in 3 days to speak directly to someone.”

**Surrey resident via Healthwatch England**

## Sharing our insight

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, Integrated Care Systems (ICSS), Surrey County Council, Public Health, Care Quality Commission (CQC), and in various boards and groups across Surrey.

## Community engagement





During January our engagement team focussed their visits in North East Hampshire and Farnham (NE Hants and Farnham), and Surrey Heath.

The table below shows our events during February. Our community engagement team are visiting Easy Surrey and Surrey Downs. We are also across Surrey raising awareness about our service.

Date	Place	Time	Surrey Area
<b>01/02/2024</b>	Information and advice, Primary Care Access co production event	9.30am - 12.30pm	Surrey wide
<b>05/02/2024</b>	Race Equality Week: Ambitions for an equitable Surrey (VCSE event)	9am - 2pm	Surrey wide
<b>07/02/2024</b>	Hilary's Hut, Staines (Public)	10am - 12noon	North West Surrey
<b>07/02/2024</b>	Hurst Green Community Fridge (Public)	10.45am -12.15pm	East Surrey
<b>08/02/2024</b>	The Meeting Room, Kings Church, Ewell (Group engagement)	10.30am - 12.30pm	Surrey Downs
<b>10/02/2024</b>	Guildford Hongkongers, Lunar New Year Market, Guildford (Public)	10am - 4pm	Surrey wide
<b>12/02/2024</b>	Royal Holloway Volunteering Fair: Student Volunteer Week (Public)	10am - 1pm	Surrey wide
<b>15/02/2024</b>	Amplifying Young People event, Epsom (Public)	10am - 4pm	Surrey Downs
<b>29/02/2024</b>	St Peters Community Breakfast, West Molesey (Public)	9.30 - 11.30am	North West Surrey

Please note: these dates may be subject to change.

To share an experience with us, or for information and signposting about health and social care, people can also contact our Helpdesk in the following ways:

Phone: 0303 303 0023

SMS (text only): 07592 787 533

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

Share your feedback via our website:

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

## About Healthwatch Surrey

We are an independent service, empowering the residents of Surrey to have their voices heard. We seek out people's experiences of health and care services and have a statutory duty to share these with service providers and decision makers, to support services to improve and tackle health inequalities. We believe that health and social care providers can best improve services by listening to people's experiences.

We also provide information and signposting to help the people of Surrey find the care that best suits their needs.

## Our distribution list

If you would like to be added to or removed from the distribution list for this Insight Bulletin, please contact our Communications and Involvement Officer [vicky.rushworth@healthwatchsurrey.co.uk](mailto:vicky.rushworth@healthwatchsurrey.co.uk)



We are committed to the quality of our information. Every three years we perform an audit so that we can be certain of this.



We are proud to be shortlisted for a national Healthwatch Impact Award, recognising our work helping to improve local NHS and social care. You can view [our video](#) highlighting how feedback from local people has been used to make positive changes health and care support.

## Luminus

The Healthwatch Surrey service is run by Luminus Insight CIC, known as Luminus.

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