

Insight,
Intelligence &
Action (IIA)
Report

November 2022

About Us

Healthwatch Derbyshire is an independent voice for the people of Derbyshire. We are here to listen to the experiences of Derbyshire residents and give them a stronger say in influencing how local health and social care services are provided.

We listen to what people have to say about their experiences of using health and social care services and feed this information through to those responsible for providing the services. We also ensure services are held to account for how they use this feedback to influence the way services are designed and run.

Healthwatch Derbyshire was set up in April 2013 as a result of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and is part of a network of local Healthwatch organisations covering every local authority across England. The Healthwatch network is supported in its work by Healthwatch England who builds a national picture of the issues that matter most to health and social care users and will ensure that this evidence is used to influence those who plan and run services at a national level.

Continuing Key Themes and Priorities

Access to GP Appointments

The ways in which patients access their GP services is changing, the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated many of these changes but even prior to the pandemic many GP's were increasingly offering a wider range of ways to access their services.

Face to face appointments are traditionally how many patients would access their GP, however this is not the only option available, and for some patients and their individual health concerns, alternative appointments may be more suitable and even preferable for their lifestyle.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, GP surgeries offered alternatives to face to face appointments that included access to care moving to a triage system, online bookings, and video and phone consultations.

Part of the role of Healthwatch Derbyshire (HWD) is to understand the experience of people using these services and to give people the opportunity to speak up and have their voices heard. Collecting feedback and providing opportunities for people to share their experiences with HWD means that we often hear about the issues and difficulties people face. As services started pandemic recovery and a level of normality returned, patients were contacting us with their frustrations at not being able to access face to face appointments. The perception from some patients appeared that they expected GP services to be delivered in the same way as before the pandemic.

The comments that HWD was hearing from patients prompted us to carry out some further work in gathering feedback to give an impression of people's experiences of accessing GP appointments.

Throughout Summer 2022 Healthwatch Derbyshire ran a survey to hear from patients, carers, and the wider public, offering an opportunity to share their views and recent experiences of accessing their GP. Feedback from the survey will help local health providers to understand how the ways in which appointments are accessed affects patients.

Over 1300 responses were received to the survey. The final report, findings and recommendations are currently being collated.

Access to Dentistry

Following on from previous work carried out by HWD in 2021, access to dentistry remains a key theme for HWD. Unfortunately, HWD continues to hear from patients who cannot access routine dental treatment, or those who have been informed that their dentists are moving to private practice. Members of the public tell us that they simply cannot find a dental practice accepting new NHS patients.

HWD are working with the local dental network and commissioners to be informed about guidance for the public, and have also created a widely shared and well received infographic around what steps to take if you cannot find a dentist, as well as if you require urgent treatment.

HWD volunteers are continuing to review the Find a Dentist website, and feedback to us their findings. HWD engagement officers are contacting those dental practices with out of date or no information, and this will also be shared with commissioners to encourage practices to update information.

HWD are involved with the Dental Transformation Board and have had sight of the NHS England Midlands Region Dental Strategy 2022-2024. We continue to have good relationships with commissioners, local dental network chairs and are part of a Healthwatch dental network.

Discharge from Hospital

In response to patient feedback regarding the hospital discharge process, HWD have begun discussions with the relevant hospital teams, and other organisations including those in the voluntary sector involved in the Home from Hospital service.

We understand that there are other work streams looking at the process involved with the flow of patients through hospitals, using patient experience to inform training resources for professionals, as well as the role that discharge from hospital can play in easing winter pressures.

HWD continues conversations with local CVS to understand how feedback is collected on patient experience of hospital discharge and the Home from Hospital service. We will work with hospital

trusts to understand more about the discharge process, in order to compare this to patient experience. Any information collected will be shared to contribute to the projects undertaken by other work streams.

Closure of DCC Day Care Centres

HWD have closely followed Derbyshire County Councils consultation into the proposed closure of 8 day centres and a redesign of the service. We promoted opportunities for local residents to take part in the consultation, and have been kept informed as to the outcome of the consultation and the decisions taken.

It has now been confirmed following a decision made by Cabinet that the proposed closures will take place, and that a new model will be put in place which includes the expansion of a Support Service Team and Community Connectors. The eight centres will be closed in phases over the next 12 months, with 4 existing day centres to remain open.

We are keen to understand how these changes have been communicated to those who use the services, and how they will be supported during the transition. Through our links with Derbyshire Carers Association we are gathering comments and feedback.

It is important that once the new model is in place and being used, and those accessing the service have experience of the new model, that feedback is sought from those impacted by the changes and using the new model to gauge whether the redesigned service continues to meet their needs.

Potential Key Themes and Priorities

The following items are potential key themes and priorities that have been identified through various methods including; patient/public feedback and comments, signposting and enquiries, and Healthwatch England key themes.

Maternal Mental Health

HWD are supporting the Healthwatch England campaign around Maternal Mental Health. With one in four women experiencing mental health problems during pregnancy and in the first year following the birth of a child, support from maternity services can significantly impact their mental health and wellbeing. A recent Healthwatch England review of the evidence of 2,500 people's experiences of maternity services showed that, overall, people's experiences are worsening.

Healthwatch England are launching a national survey to better understand what is working and what needs improving for people who develop mental health difficulties relating to their maternity experience. We also want to know whether the six-week checks meet the needs of new mothers and birthing parents.

The goal of the campaign is to improve mental health support in maternity care and ensure birthing parents are supported before, during and after birth.

HWD will gather local data and responses to contribute towards the national survey, as well as understand the experiences of maternal mental health support for new mothers and birthing parents in Derbyshire.

Increasing numbers of referrals to Health/Mental Health Advocacy

A core function of HWD is the gathering and receiving of comments, feedback and people's experiences of using health and social care services. Part of this often includes signposting to other organisations for help and support.

As part of a regular review of comments, signposting and enquiries there indicates that there are increasing numbers of referrals to health/mental health advocacy services. The majority of referrals are to Derbyshire Minds for their advocacy service. We are working with Derbyshire Mind to establish the number of referrals they receive via ourselves and whether HWD could offer any support into the process, and how we make referrals. This would also assist in gaining an understanding of waiting times in order to inform public, as well as the demands upon this service.

Engaging with Children and Young People

Healthwatch Derbyshire were invited to join the JUCD Children's Board following on from a previous piece of work on engaging with young people. The Board were impressed with the previous work carried out and saw it as impactful and influential.

In September 2022 HWD was given the opportunity to engage with young people on a face to face basis at two further education colleges in Derbyshire as part of their Fresher's Fayres. Due to the length of time that had elapsed since quality discussions had taken place with young people, it was vital to use the opportunity to find out what young people do to help them thrive and keep physically and emotionally. Over 200 young people shared their views on their physical & emotional wellbeing.

The key issues raised included, a desire from young people for information about help and support to stay well. There is a lack of knowledge with young people that can be provided by the health and care system, using trusted sources that are easy to access and understand. The need for greater availability and access to exercise opportunities, and concerns around the cost of accessing activities and gyms. Overall young people have a good knowledge and awareness of the need to stay physically and emotionally well.

HWD see the value of engaging with young people as future adults, and users of services which directly effects them. HWD continues to share information with JUCD Children's Board as they establish their emerging priorities for children and young people.

Referrals to care

This is a Healthwatch England theme looking into people's experiences of delays or problems when being referred for care. Healthwatch England were gathering experiences between August to September 2022. HWD have supported and shared opportunities to gather feedback and will request any local data when available. A report is due in January 2023 and HWD will review this report for local data and insight to inform future work around referrals to care.

Contact

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