

Healthwatch Sandwell

Annual Report 2017/18



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Message from our Chair



Welcome to Healthwatch Sandwell's Annual Report for 2017-18. The last year has seen us continue to engage with patients, carers and the public about the health and social care issues that really matter to them. We have continued to reach out to listen to people's issues, with extra efforts to reach the seldom heard, and produced real change through our investigations and reporting.

Our staff have continued to be busy with public meetings, Enter and View visits, responding to individual requests from patients, carers and families, publishing several reports into services and getting out and about. One example of a report is that into the day hospice service at Rowley

Regis. Our staff and volunteers visited the service and found an excellent facility, whilst identifying minor improvements that the palliative team have been able to incorporate into their service. We have continued our dialogue with the team and are now exploring how we can work together to enable patients and their experiences to play a greater role in improving services.

As we look forward to the year ahead, Sandwell's health and social care services continue to face changes and some unique challenges, and we will endeavour to ensure that your voice is being considered and listened to, and to support and bring forward these views when needed. Fellow Board members, staff and myself have been active in addressing changes to oncology (cancer) services at Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospital Trust. This has been an ongoing issue for several years and Healthwatch Sandwell has had an ongoing role in bringing forward the consumer voice; and a public consultation is currently underway. We are pleased with efforts so far by NHS England and Sandwell and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group to engage with service users and their families, and we hope that all of the service providers respond positively to the results in formulating an offer that addresses these views. We will continue to play an active role in trying to see that this happens.

There are also challenges beyond Sandwell's borders that affect us. The Black Country Sustainability and Transformation Partnership will have increasing influence on our services, and even though it has now been running for some years, it is still developing; it remains unclear exactly what this is going to mean for the services patients receive. Working with our colleagues from the other Black Country and Birmingham Healthwatches, we have representation on the Board and regular updates with the leaders.

Following the abandonment of the Black Country Partnership Mental Health Trust merger with other mental health service providers, there remain concerns that need to be addressed. These are not just the strategic ones relating to capacity that led to the merger proposition, but more importantly, the quality of these services that patients receive. The question has to be asked as to whether resources expended on this merger activity have been wisely used, whether or not decisions could have been made earlier, and what has been the effect of diverting resources from frontline services. We have continued to have issues relating to mental health regularly raised with us, and in the following year hope to carry out investigations to capture what the patient experience is.

I could not report on the year without mentioning Midland Metropolitan Hospital and the unfortunate position that this project is now in. The priority is that this project gets back on track, and we have confidence that the leadership of Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospital Trust is doing all it can and has the right people to take on this enormous challenge. In such circumstances hindsight is a wonderful

thing, but nevertheless, there are questions that the public needs to have answered concerning how this situation has arisen, not least the apparent failure of the due diligence process. This is important, so that such mistakes can be avoided in the future, and others do not find themselves in this position with NHS funds being diverted away from frontline services.

Healthwatch Sandwell has seen its own resources remain steady over the last year, and we are grateful to the Local Authority and Councillors for the support they have given us to provide this service for local people, and in particular for the recognition of the work that we do and what we have achieved. We have been able to retain all of our staff and I would like to thank them all for their hard work and expertise, and for delivering an exemplary local Healthwatch for the people of Sandwell. Finally, I'd like to thank the Healthwatch Sandwell Board for their continued commitment and service to Healthwatch and Sandwell.

John Clothier, Chair 2018

The year at a glance

This year we've reached 2333 people on social media



Our volunteers help us with everything from Enter and View to Experience Gathering



We've visited over 160 venues listening to people's health and social care experiences



100+ visits to local services including walk-in centres, GP surgeries, and hospitals



Our reports have tackled issues ranging from accessing flu jabs to GP appointments.



We've met hundreds of local people at our community events



About Healthwatch

Local Healthwatches exist to make health and care services work for the people who use them.

Everything we say and do is informed by our connections to local people. Our sole focus is on understanding the needs, experiences and concerns of people of all ages who use services and to speak out on their behalf.

We are uniquely placed as a national network, with a local Healthwatch in every local authority area in England.

Our role is to ensure that local decision makers and health and care services put the experiences of people at the heart of their work.

We believe that asking people more about their experiences can identify issues that, if addressed, will make services better.

Healthwatch Sandwell is an independent organisation funded by Central Government via Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. There are one hundred and fifty two local Healthwatches in the country.

As well as local Healthwatches, Healthwatch England works at the national level. They take the experiences of local Healthwatches and use them to influence national policy. The organisations who plan, run and regulate health and social care services have a

legal obligation to listen to what Healthwatch England says.

“Once again I congratulate ‘Healthwatch’ for its continued efforts in helping to improve the health and wellbeing of Sandwell residents. The report highlights the many activities you undertook in response to the needs and concerns of residents and stakeholders and the resulting outcomes. It is good to see the links with Sandwell’s Vision 2030 especially number 5... “Sandwell is a place where we live healthy lives and live longer and where those of us who are vulnerable feel respected and cared for.”

May I also say thank you to all the volunteers.

Keep up the well valued work.”

Cllr Ann Shackleton,
Cabinet member
for Adult Social
Care, Sandwell
MBC



When Healthwatch England is made aware of failing services, it reports them to key national organisations, including the Care Quality Commission, of which it is a sub-committee, and central government. These organisations must submit a public response to Healthwatch England's concerns.

Aims and Purpose

Healthwatch Sandwell works with consumers and partners in the following ways:

Concerns

Picking up on and listening to consumer concerns in a timely manner, including being responsive to the 'early or lone' voices; raising concerns with those responsible, and following up. Concerns may also come through whistleblowing. We define a concern as something causing repeated consumer issues, which individuals are unlikely to take (early) action on, or a 'low level' complaint that is just put up with, e.g. 'unfriendly' waiting rooms.

Customer Care and Complaints

Identifying and signposting to customer care services and advocacy; following up if this hasn't worked, e.g. 'Why has my complaint been ignored?'; testing and checking customer care services.

Community Engagement

Working with the community and volunteers to deliver our aims; acting as a channel for voluntary and community groups working with consumers e.g. carers' group, to raise their issues and hear their concerns.

Consultations

Maintaining an overview of consultations by health and social care organisations and promoting to consumers. Ensuring consultation is done properly; raising issues around potential service issues and

The
GOOD
The
BAD And The
UGLY

Tell us your experience of
Sandwell Health & Social
Care Services

healthwatch
Sandwell

Your Health & Social Care Champion
Tel: 0121 569 7210
www.healthwatchesandwell.co.uk
info@healthwatchesandwell.co.uk

Tweets: @HWSandwell
Facebook: Healthwatch.Sandwell

acting as a critical friend to those delivering the consultation process.

Consumer Rights

Identifying and clarifying the rights of consumers of health and social care services; promoting and providing information on these rights, and advice on enforcing them.

How We Work

Healthwatch Sandwell aims to promote, gather, analyse and act on issues relating to patients' and their relatives' experiences of health and social care services. Promotion of our services and information about health and social care services has included reaching out directly to the public or to existing networks already engaged with the community. We have established our presence and raised our profile so that those looking for help can find us easily.

We gather views and experiences from many places, with a focus on hearing directly from patients and their relatives. Through our Experience Gathering; we have talked directly to hundreds of

people, simply asking them to tell us about their last experience of using social care or health services. We want to hear good and not so good experiences and don't ask people to make any judgements. There are many other ways we gather information such as patients contacting us directly and liaising with over sixty community based organisations every month.

Staff

Healthwatch Sandwell's work is delivered by a team of staff based at Walker Grange in Tipton:

- Mark Guest - CEO
- Lavidia Fletcher - Office Manager
- Ian McGarry - Communications and Engagement Officer
- Anita Andrews - Research and Information Officer
- Melissa Elders - Support Officer
- Janet Foster - Support Officer (July 2017 - present)
- Charlotte Fletcher (May 2017 - Jan 2018)

What we do: Advising, guiding and listening to health and care service users



Consultation Network

Our Consultation Network is a network of local community groups and organisations across the borough. These are listed on our website and contacted regularly to share their issues and hear our updates. We created this network to enable these groups to represent us to their members, some who may not meet us at engagement events or visits. Any group or organisation can join, and the current members include those shown below.

The total membership number is now 73 and our latest member is the Brasshouse Community Centre in Smethwick.



Health and Social Care Group



Our Health and Social Care Group holds regular public meetings at different locations throughout Sandwell. The group enables the community to meet commissioners and providers of services and find out about service developments, changes and ongoing consultations. We also provide feedback on our own activity.



The group is chaired by a Board member. During 2017/18, the following topics included:

- April 2017 - Care Navigation and End of Life Care
- June 2017 - Developing New Ways of Working and Changes to Prescriptions and Medications

- September 2017 - Discharge from Hospital
- March 2018 - Purple Points and Changes to GP Surgeries



Experience Gathering

Experience Gathering is a key activity of Healthwatch Sandwell, taking place continuously throughout the year, several times every week. Our staff meet with the public in all sorts of places including supermarkets, bingo halls and at community events.

‘Tell us about your last experience of health and social care’

We promote Healthwatch Sandwell’s work and provide advice and signposting for people in need of support. We also ask people to ‘tell us about your last experience of health and social care’.

The information gathered provides us with invaluable insight into the general quality of services and flags up more serious incidents. We now have a database of thousands of comments which we are able to interrogate when asked about specific services, such as by

the Care Quality Commission, or when concerns are raised about a service. This year, our experience gathering has included:

166 + people signposted

288 + experiences gathered

2725+ leaflets distributed around Sandwell

163+ venues visited including 22 new ones



Where We Have Been Experience Gathering

Wesley Community Centre, Brasshouse Community Centre, Yew Tree and Tamebridge Community Centre, Gayton Road Community Centre, Jubilee Community Centre, Libraries around Sandwell, West Bromwich Town Hall, SWEDA World Mental Health Event West Bromwich, Sandwell Rethinking Refugees

Event, Oldbury Council House, St Mary's Magdalene Church West Bromwich, Tesco West Bromwich, Tesco Dudley, TCT Mental Health Event...



...West Bromwich Albion, Parkinson's Support Group, Age UK, Waltham House West Bromwich, Art Group Oldbury, Tipton Christian Church, Charlemont Methodist Church, Agewell Dementia Support Group, Portway Lifestyle Centre Oldbury, Wednesbury Leisure Centre, St Johns Community Centre, Dorothy Parkes Centre, Other Leisure Centres across Sandwell, Sandwell College, Various Churches.

Enter and View Visits

Enter and View gives Healthwatch Sandwell the opportunity to formally visit health and social care premises to enable us to find out how these services work for patients, residents, carers, family members and staff that use them, including what works well and what can be improved.

We have a team of 18 trained volunteers who carry out our Enter and View programme. During 2017/18 we carried

out visits to 5 services in Sandwell. These were:

- Wellcroft House, Oldbury
- Heart of Sandwell Day Hospice
- Bloomfield Court, Tipton
- Hall Green Residential Home, West Bromwich
- Pedmore House, Cradley Heath

All except one of these visits were to residential and nursing care homes as part of our programme:

‘To examine the delivery and quality of care provided at Residential and Nursing homes in Sandwell.’

The visit to the Heart of Sandwell Day Hospice was carried out in conjunction with a service evaluation following the relocation of the hospice to Rowley Regis Hospital.

When visits are made, the visiting team collectively prepares a formal report that is shared with local commissioners, providers of services and the Care Quality Commission. These reports are also publicly available on our website.

Networking and Partnership

A large part of Healthwatch Sandwell’s role is to represent the patient voice and work in partnership with health and social care commissioners and providers. This work is undertaken by our volunteer Board members and staff.

This includes statutory places such as:

- Health and Wellbeing Board
- Primary Care Co-commissioning Committee

‘As the Healthwatch representative on the Health and Wellbeing Board, I have been able to ensure that the patient voice is considered in local strategic planning of health and social care services. This has included changes to oncology (cancer) services, the Midland Metropolitan Hospital and our Healthwatch’s quarterly activity updates are forwarded to the Board’

*John Clothier, Chair
Healthwatch Sandwell*

Other examples include:

- Better Care Fund
- CCG Quality and Safety
- Clinical Governance Committee (Public Health)
- CCG Patient Partnership & Advisory Group
- Sandwell Safeguarding Children’s Board
- Statutory Local Authority Group
- Sandwell Safeguarding Adults Board
- Sandwell & West Birmingham Hospital Trust
- Health & Adult Social Care Scrutiny Overview Committee
- Joint Health Scrutiny Committee
- Maternity Strategy Steering Group
- Health & Wellbeing Board Engagement Group
- Quality Surveillance Group (BSBC) / NHS E

As a regular attendee of Sandwell & West Birmingham Hospitals Trust Board, I have raised the concerns of patients that we reported on throughout the year, which has included patients worries about complaining, and has led to the introduction of Purple Points for hospital in patients.

Bill Hodgetts, Vice Chair Healthwatch Sandwell

Research and Reports

Healthwatch Sandwell regularly reviews what it is hearing from the public and uses this to direct further work and where to take action. This can range from following up an issue on behalf of a group of patients with a service provider, to carrying out an extensive investigation and publishing a report. In collaboration with HWS Board, a research plan has



been developed and is regularly reviewed and updated so that current local issues are addressed. The methodologies

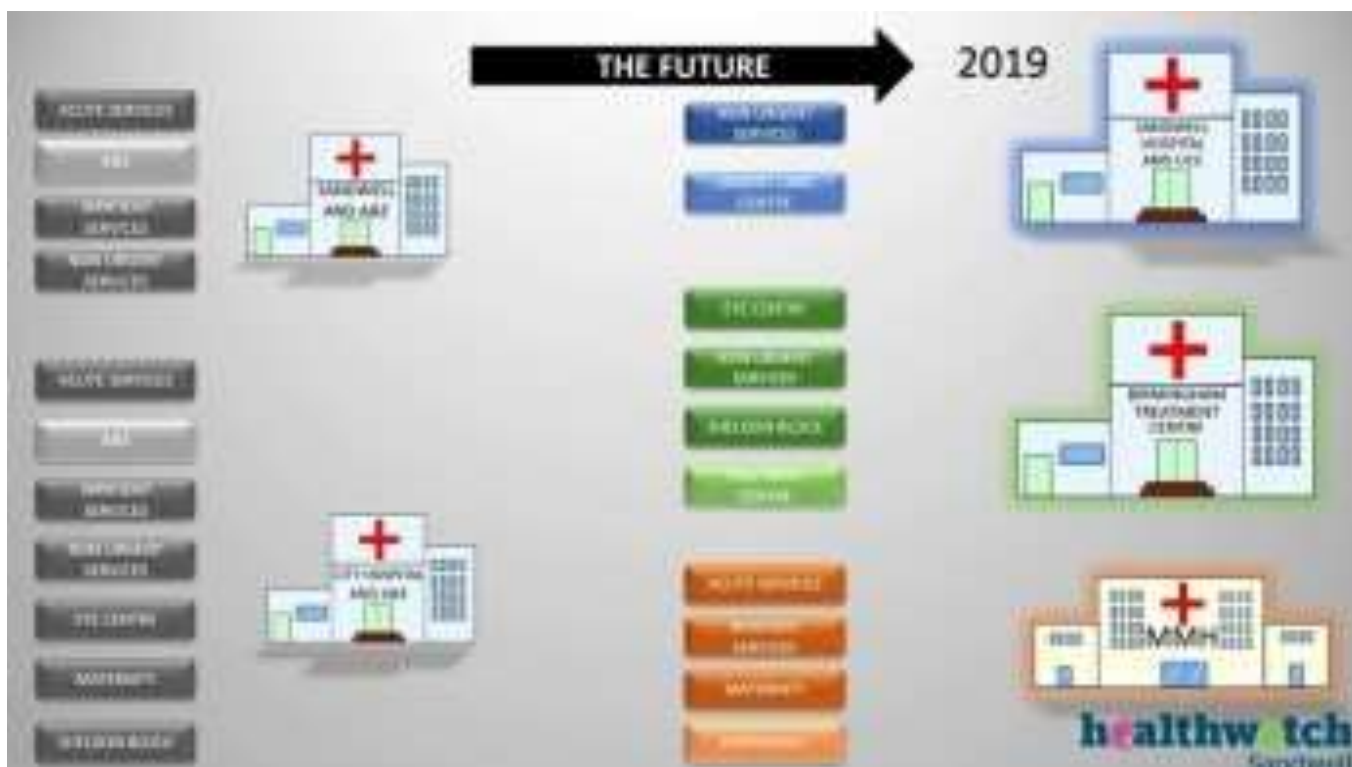
utilised vary and are responsive to the particular target group and/or subject.

Healthwatch Sandwell makes extensive efforts to ensure that its research meets with the highest ethical standards. Every piece of work is considered individually according to best practice, previous experience and Healthwatch England guidelines. Based on National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) guidance, our research tends to be considered service evaluation. We do not carry out clinical research.

Social Media

In October 2017 HWS undertook a publicity campaign to hear the public's questions concerning services at the new Midland Metropolitan Hospital (MMH) and the changes that will take place at Sandwell General and City hospitals.





This campaign created substantial discussion on Facebook. The public were encouraged to submit their questions via our website, and the campaign was publicised using our other social media platforms: Twitter and Instagram.

It reached over 7,000 people.

The campaign was carried out with the support of SWBHT who included these questions, and their responses on their website.

Additionally, we produced a short animation to show where services would be located when the new hospital opens



and how the existing hospital sites would continue to provide services.

This animation is available on our YouTube feed and can be viewed by [clicking HERE](#). Alternatively, search on YouTube for Healthwatch Sandwell.

Self Help Apps

Media applications (Apps) are become more widely available to help people find out more about health issues, symptoms, better healthcare and how to book appointments etc.

We now provide a page on our website to detail apps that can be used to support people with health and social care needs. These are particularly helpful in providing advice on therapies and self-help for people with mental health and disabilities.

We do stress that the links to self-help apps on our website are intended to provide supportive relevant information only. It does not provide medical advice and it is not a substitute for a medical consultation. If in doubt it is best to consult a medical professional.



Children and Young People

During the past year we have been making further efforts to engage with children and young people and to give them more of a voice on how health and social care services are delivered.

We have continued to work closely with Sandwell College, and others, to gain the views of young people in Sandwell. Additionally we attend meetings of the VCS Children and Young People Forum.

On 6th June 2017, Healthwatch Sandwell took a group of students from Sandwell College on a visit to the West Midlands Ambulance Service headquarters at Brierley Hill.

We were welcomed by Sue Green, the trust's Deputy Director for Nursing and Quality who gave an overview of the trust, before taking us on a tour of the headquarters where we saw the operations of Patient Transport, Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS) Human Resources, Finance and finally the Emergency Operations Centre. At 11am the team joined the WMAS staff for a minute's silence in memory of those killed and injured in the terrorist attacks in Manchester and London. We also thought of the emergency services staff who worked so hard during and after these terrorist attacks.

Finally, we were joined by the trust Chief Executive Anthony Marsh in a group photograph (*photo courtesy of West Midlands Ambulance Service*)

Student feedback included:

"I'd love to be a Paramedic" - ML, level 3 HSC student

"Very interesting" - Jochebed, level 1 HSC student

"Opened my eyes to new and exciting opportunities" - SD, level 3 HSC student

"Definitely a worthwhile visit" - Staff member

"Everyone seemed friendly " - level 1 HSC student

"Good experience. I'm considering working within the ambulance service"
"level 3 HSC student

"It was good, and I learnt new stuff" - level 1 HSC student

"Really good experience, as I learnt a lot" - level 1 HSC student

"Lots going on," - level 1 HSC student



"I thought everyone in uniform would be a paramedic, but other roles wear uniforms too; I didn't know that" - level 3 HSC student

Real World Coproduction

Healthwatch Sandwell has created a unique approach to engaging and involving service users in developing services, building on coproduction techniques, which we have called Real World Coproduction.

Great that parents from the community can be involved in the process - evaluation feedback

Working together with Maternity Services at Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospital Trust, Healthwatch Sandwell ran three Real World Coproduction Workshops between 3rd July 2017 and 26th March 2018. The Real World Coproduction workshops generated practical ideas to improve the service, based on the knowledge and experience of service users and staff.

Over thirty suggestions were made for improving the services.

'More sessions!' - evaluation feedback

**Real
World
Coproduction** 

In total, there were over forty participants in the workshop that included:

- Service Users and Family
- Frontline Staff
- Management

Healthwatch Sandwell provided several staff to facilitate each session.

Keep up workshops as believe very productive - evaluation feedback

As a result of the success of these workshops, discussions have been taking place with Palliative Care at the Hospital, and Adult Services at the Local Authority with a view to running more sessions.

Real World Coproduction works by building the session around the actual lived experience of a particular patient; coming up with practical ideas that could have made things better, and using a structured methodology to turn that into a categorised action plan that can be used to deliver quick and longer term improvements.

Our work in focus: The difference we've made



During 2017/2018, HWS have been involved in many activities that have made a difference to the provision of care and support for the people of Sandwell. This involvement has been at various levels from strategic to one-offs. The aim is to make a difference to local people's lives so that they receive services that are responsive and sensitive to their needs.

Why Do Good People Allow Bad Things to Happen? - Re-visited

In January 2017 we returned to Sandwell General Hospital to follow up on our report 'Why Do Good People Allow Bad Things to Happen?' that was published in February 2016.



The aim of this re-visit was to see if patient care and experience had improved, and, where possible, to see if the report's recommendations had been implemented.

This re-visit found that care, communication with patients, and perceptions of staff behaviour had improved. However, concerns still remained about the complaints procedure. The follow-up report recommended that the entire complaints experience, from a patient perspective, be reviewed.

In response to this recommendation, SWBHT have developed a project called Purple Points, which are phones that have been installed in various locations. This project is detailed later in this report. Toby Lewis (Chief Executive) reported at SWBHT Annual General Meeting on 29th June 2017, that 'purple phones' are to be installed on all wards for patients to raise issues and that HWS had included this issue in their report and that this is in part a response to that.

GP Access Survey - Opening Times and Booking Preferences

We carried out a survey to find out people's preferences when booking an appointment with their GP and how to book.

This investigation took place as a result of discussions at the Primary Care Co-Commissioning Committee: Sandwell and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group (SWB CCG) meeting of 5th April 2017, regarding 7 day opening for General Practitioners. Various views were presented, and evidence gaps highlighted.

The overall finding of this investigation was that, if there is varied and available access to GP appointments, weekend

opening is only preferred for serious conditions.



**GP Access Survey –
Opening Times and Booking Preferences**



*Report by Healthwatch Sandwell
July 2017*



It was also found that GP opening times is a far more complex area than simply asking people when they want GPs to open, depending on several factors, and it is difficult to obtain meaningful evidence.

There was significant preference shown for most of the appointment times and booking methods presented in the investigation scenarios. There was also considerable support for a Skype or telephone consultation with any GP, if it was within ten minutes of the request.

Flu Jab Survey

In June and July 2017 HWS carried out an investigation into the public's awareness of where flu vaccinations could be obtained. This investigation resulted from an item at the SWB CCG Primary Care Co-Commissioning Committee, where evidence on the positive effects of flu vaccination in relation to hospital admissions was presented. There was a discussion that identified that they are made available widely and that this is publicised. However, there was no evidence regarding public awareness of this availability.



Flu Vaccination Availability in Sandwell



*Report by Healthwatch Sandwell
September 2017*



The survey found that General Practitioners were the most popular providers of the vaccination. 10% of respondents knew that it was available at supermarkets. This is a relatively low number and suggests that the public's

awareness of this provider is not widely known.

Based on the findings, HWS made recommendations which included, publicising where flu immunisation is available, especially in supermarket pharmacies.

SWB CCG responded to each of our recommendations.

Patient Participation Groups

Commencing September 2017, HWS with a team of volunteers began visiting each GP Practice to find out patients' awareness and involvement in Patient Participation Groups (PPGs).

Image of one of our reports



Patient Participation Group

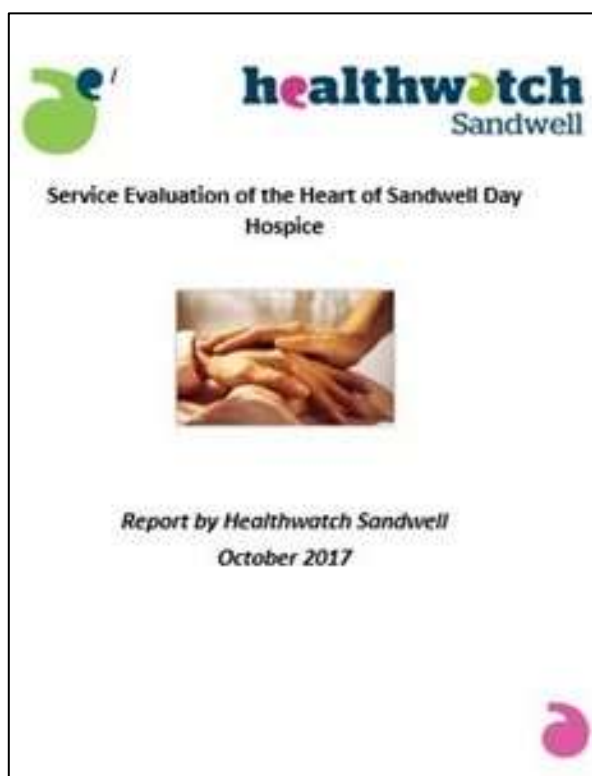
From 1 April 2015, it became a contractual requirement for all English practices to form a PPG and to make reasonable efforts for this to be representative of the practice population. PPGs are the primary mechanism for GPs to engage with patients.

We are surveying each practice separately, town by town, as all practices have their own ways of working.

A report for each town will be published when completed, with a final report on the collated findings and recommendations. To date 4 towns have been visited; the remaining 2 towns will be visited early during 2018/19. The findings so far indicate that knowledge and involvement in PPGs is minimal.

Service Evaluation of the Heart of Sandwell Day Hospice.

In July 2017 HWS visited the Heart of Sandwell Day Hospice at Rowley Regis Community Hospital, Moor Lane, Rowley Regis to evaluate the service. This evaluation resulted from recent changes to hospice services and a consultation by SWB CCG 'Improving Day Hospice Services. Public Consultation: 17 August to 24 November 2016'.



At a HWS Health and Social Care Group meeting (September 2016), which publicised the above consultation,

concerns were raised by the public which included whether the new services would be as described and whether they would meet patients' needs.

The investigation aimed to assess provision at The Heart of Sandwell Day Hospice in relation to what SWB CCG pledged in their consultation report (November 2016), and to evaluate the service based on what SWB CCG found in various reports/consultations which identified what patients/carers wanted from a day hospice service.

Patients and staff were interviewed at the Day Hospice. The feedback found that the service delivered what was promised during the consultation exercise and to a good standard. The patients and relatives reported that the staff are attentive, kind and caring.

Based on the findings, HWS made the following recommendations that Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust (SWBHT):

Recruit more volunteer drivers and provide more vehicles so that patients avoid long journeys to the service.

That consideration is given to accessing more space so that the service can accommodate more patients in the future.

The HWS team are due to re-visit the service in June 2018 to assess progress with the report's recommendations.

Life in a Care Home - What's it Like to Live in a Care Home?

In August, Healthwatch England (HWE) published a report about Enter and View visits carried out by the Healthwatch network throughout England.

Between January 2016 and April 2017, local Healthwatch staff and volunteers across England visited 197 care homes across 63 different local authority areas to find out what day to day life is really like for many of those living in care homes. This study collates the views and experiences of those who live, visit and work in care homes across England.



HWS contributed to this report and was mentioned twice. Firstly, one of HWS's recommendations for a home was that it needed to find a GP practice that will respond to residents' requests for medical attention. GPs at the local medical practice refused to attend the home in person and only offered telephone advice. The GP practice had previously been on a retainer but had recently increased their fee fivefold. When HWS followed up in June this year, they heard from the new manager that

there were now no issues with residents accessing the local GP.

“We are proud that the visits, carried out by our volunteers who visit care homes in Sandwell, have been recognised by Healthwatch England in this report. This shows the value of the important work that Healthwatch Sandwell is doing, and the role it plays in ensuring dignity for elderly and vulnerable members of our community. We have seen residents supported by caring, dedicated and friendly staff who provide good levels of care, dignity and respect.”

John Clothier, Chair of HWS

Introduction of Purple Points by Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospital Trust

The Purple Points initiative is a direct result of work undertaken by HWS on patient experiences at Sandwell General Hospital.

It is a facility available outside inpatient areas where patients, their family or carers are able to raise a concern, via a telephone, twelve hours a day, seven days a week. They have been installed outside ward areas at Sandwell General, City and Rowley Regis Hospitals.

There are six telephone extensions available for those wanting to raise a concern, one for those who wish to use English and then five additional numbers, one for each of the commonest five

languages: Bengali, Urdu, Polish, Romanian and Punjabi.

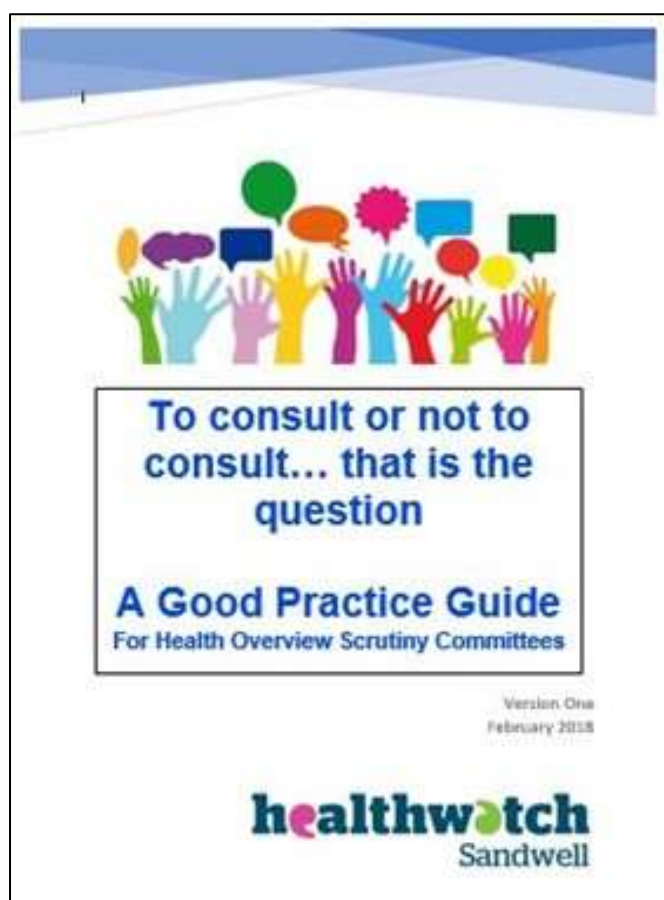


The ‘Purple Point’ will also allow patients and their representatives to pay a compliment to a staff member, team or service, or to give thanks. Calls will be answered by a dedicated team of staff working within the Governance Support Unit.



SWBHT Board Report: An Introduction of the Purple Point (1st February 2018) and the SWBHT web site, acknowledged that HWS helped the Trust to identify that there were opportunities for them to be more receptive to concerns.

A Good Practice Guide: For Health Overview Scrutiny Committees



HWS have produced a guide entitled 'To consult or not to consult... that is the question' for Health Overview Scrutiny Committees (HOSC), which are statutory Local Authority bodies with the duty to oversee NHS services.

HOSC's powers include being able to designate any health service changes as significant changes, which means that consultation is then required. Consultation must meet certain requirements, which are detailed in this guidance.

In Sandwell the duties of HOSC are met by the Health and Adult Social Care Overview Scrutiny Board. This guidance has been produced by Healthwatch Sandwell for use by this Board.

This guide will be presented at a future HOSC meeting, after which it will be available on our website.

Case Studies

1: Support to Relative Who Made a Complaint to Adult Social Care (Sandwell MBC)

The daughter of a Care Home resident (deceased) made a complaint to Adult Social Care about the incorrect advice she had been given from Adult Practitioners with regards to care home fees for her relative. This complaint was escalated to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman. The latter upheld the complaint, and this resulted in the complainant receiving a letter of apology from the Director of Adult Social Care and all the overpaid fees were reimbursed. HWS supported this complainant throughout the process that lasted nearly two years and the complainant rang HWS to express her gratitude.

2: Guidance about Mental Health Process

A gentleman with mental health issues was referred to Psychological Services by his GP. The gentlemen had requested that he attend the Queen Elizabeth Hospital as opposed to Edward Street, due to personal issues. The GP informed him that he could only be referred to Edward Street Hospital.

When he questioned this, he was advised by the GP Practice to make a complaint, but he did not feel confident to do this.

The gentleman contacted HWS for support and clarification about where a psychological assessment could take place.

HWS signposted him to the practice manager (to make an initial complaint) and to POWhER for an advocate to help him. HWS also clarified with the Community Mental Health Team about a psychological assessment, it transpired that the information given was accurate.

After the gentleman had communicated with the surgery, his GP arranged for a psychiatrist from Edward Street to see him at the surgery. It was also arranged that the consultation took place on the ground floor (a request the gentleman had requested due to his anxiety)

Afterwards the gentleman contacted HWS. He reported that everything had gone 'fantastically' and,

"I don't know what I would have done without you. You have been the only one to support me through this and thank you for your help. Wonderful support."

3: Guidance in Changing GP

A Sandwell resident who was registered with a GP outside the area, was unhappy with the service that was offered. This included not being able to get medication for a long-term condition and being unable to obtain an appointment in a timely manner.

HWS staff guided her through the process of changing GP and suggested visiting the Walk-in Centre, Parsonage Street, West Bromwich in the interim.

The resident contacted HWS to give feedback about the good service she received from the Walk-in Centre and had also changed her GP. She was very happy with the advice from HWS.

4: Challenging Practice at Local Doctor's Surgery

A Sandwell resident who was diagnosed with oesophageal cancer, was unhappy with the negative behaviour of the receptionist at his GP practice. He was also dissatisfied that there were difficulties in obtaining repeat prescriptions. HWS signposted him to POWhER (for advocacy) and to the Practice Manager. A meeting was facilitated, and the issues were resolved successfully.

The resident was satisfied with the outcome and appreciated the support and advice from HWS.

5: Help for Son with Visual Impairment

A mother was trying to obtain help from a Social Worker for her adult son who has a visual impairment. He wanted to live

independently and there was no care plan in place for him.

She had attempted to contact Adult Social Care on several occasions, including leaving messages, but had not received any response. HWS signposted the mother to Sandwell Enquiry, who then allocated a Social Worker. Her son has now received help from Social Workers and support from KeyRing Living Support Networks

The mother expressed thanks to HWS for the advice and commented:

‘it’s rare that people actually call when they say they will’

6: Support and Guidance for Terminally Ill Patient

A man who is terminally ill contacted HWS requesting support to come to terms with his condition. He had seen various GPs who had not provided any information about local resources, especially 1:1 counselling.

HWS signposted him to Heart of Sandwell Hospice Day Service. Although he didn’t want to attend the Day Service, he received appropriate support and has been told he can contact them whenever he needs someone to talk to. The man was very appreciative for the advice from HWS.

7: Thank you!

HWS signposted a Senior Mentor from The Hub: Black Country Training Group (BCTG) to the Sandwell Hospital Press Office who has arranged for a Doctor who specialises in Cardiology to come and speak to young men about the importance of having a healthy heart. The Senior Mentor commented:

“I honestly would not have known where else to turn if you did not help so thank you very much! You have been very helpful”.

Our plans for next year



Future Priorities

Our main priorities are to maintain the level of service that we have provided over the last year, and to continue to look for innovative ways of working that can make us more effective and responsive to the needs of the public.

We produce a regular programme of at least quarterly investigative reports, responding quickly to the latest information we have heard. We will continue with this, and with developing our approaches and volunteer base to increase effectiveness. We have been developing our volunteer resources over the last year, and they now play a key role in many investigations. We want to continue building on this work and extending it into more areas.

Following the successful piloting of ‘Real World Coproduction’, our unique approach to coproduction and engagement, we now want to work with more health and social care providers to deliver workshops in order to involve more patients in influencing services.

Over the last year we were able to try out various digital approaches to engagement. This built on our already strong social media base, and had some great successes, including the Midland Metropolitan Hospital Facebook campaign. We also learnt a great deal about digital strategies in relation to organisations such as ours, and will be using this to continue our work in this area.

We have in place strong networks and partner relationships, reliable methods for hearing the views of the public, and

an understanding of and links to the organisations and infrastructure responsible for delivering health and social care services. We will look to do this critically, as it is not possible to attend every meeting or group, which would not be a good use of public resources. Therefore, we will prioritise our efforts to where we can have the greatest impact, and where our voice is truly being listened to.

In order to increase impact, we aim to be more pro-active in challenging the actions and decisions of statutory bodies when questions have been raised or failings reported, and will seek to hold them to account by using our powers to request answers. This will include their duties to involve and consult the public in decision making, and how they are meeting the legal requirements to do this meaningfully as opposed to simply communicating already made decisions.

Finally, we have to meet the challenge of GDPR (as do all organisations). We have always taken the privacy of those who work with us very seriously and we don't believe that we will have to change any of our practices. However, the emphasis within GDPR on administration and record keeping will create an extra burden (as for all organisations). Local Healthwatches also possibly require a Data Protection Officer. This could have a major impact on the resources of a small organisation such as ours, and we are looking at how to meet this challenge, but keeping our fingers crossed that common sense will prevail as GDPR is implemented.

Our people



Our board

The members of our Board are:

- John Clothier. Chair
- William Hodgetts
- Wasim Ali
- Geoff Tranter
- Kwadwo Owusu-Darko
- Teresa Culverwell
- Glenn Jones
- Kushvinder Chahal
- Percy Eamus

Healthwatch Sandwell is governed by its community Board which is ultimately responsible for all decision making. It is proud to have had this level of community control from the start.

The Board meets quarterly for a formal meeting, and later to consider the quarterly Healthwatch Activity Report. This report is concerned with matters relating directly to health and social care, providing the time to be considered without distraction, and allows the main

Board meeting to concentrate on company matters. This meeting, like with the main Board meeting, are held in public.

Healthwatch Sandwell Board members take an active role in representing the view of patients on various strategic partnerships and groups throughout the Borough. The Board aims for every member to be the lead in at least one area e.g. Hospital Trust. This approach ensures that representation of patients' views is as close to the community as possible.

How we involve lay people and volunteers

The involvement of lay people and volunteers is at the very heart of our governance and decision making, with the Board being comprised of community volunteers. The Board has overall control of all decisions. Its main meetings are held in public, supported by information gathered from the public.

Our finances



INCOME		£
Funding received from local authority to deliver local Healthwatch statutory activities		175,000
Previous year's reserves (Local Authority)		90,000
Additional income		1,052
Reserves for this financial year		(97,186)
Total income		168,866
EXPENDITURE		
Operational costs		7,153
Staffing costs		155,417
Office costs		6,552
Total expenditure		169,122
Total Loss		256
Balance brought forward		711
Reserves		455

Notes:

Note: 7,186 of income has been deferred into 2016-17 year. This is recorded on the balance sheet.

Office space is provided directly by the Local Authority as part of funding support.

Contact us



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We will be making this annual report publicly available by 30th June 2018 by publishing it on our website and circulating it to Healthwatch England, CQC, NHS England, Clinical Commissioning Group, Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and Sandwell MBC.

We confirm that we are using the Healthwatch Trademark (which covers the logo and Healthwatch brand) when undertaking work on our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

If you require this report in an alternative format please contact us at the address above.



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Annual Report 2017-18

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