**Representative Engagement in Sandwell**

Working on our intelligence and as part of our board decision making policy, we are focusing on 3 main areas:

* SEND support outside of school hours and weekends
* Carers Support, young carers and carers of children with disabilities
* Underrepresented groups
* Digital Inequalities

**Conversations with Foster Carers in Sandwell**

Sandwell Children’s Trust – Voices Heard Event Healthwatch were kindly invited to attend the Voices Heard Foster event on Wednesday 29th May at Coneygre Community Centre in Tipton. The event was a celebration of foster caring in Sandwell and an information and promotion event showcasing local support services. But mostly important, it gave both foster carers and fostered children an opportunity to share their experiences. We were able to talk to foster parents about some of the challenges that they face in accessing services to support their fostered child or children. The findings reveal several significant challenges faced by foster carers in accessing essential services and support for both themselves and the children in their care. These challenges are complex and impact the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the foster care system

We have also recently published the report on or website and it highlights some of the issues faced by foster carers. We also welcome further foster carers to contact us and share their views on services, resources and concerns.

Based on this and talking to some parents around EHCP access, CAMHS, out of hours medical support for children with ADHD and autism we are undertaking a  project to talk to further parents around carer support.

**Digital Inequalities**

Sandwell has a low update of digital use for appointment booking through both the NHS App and GP digital platforms. Whilst there has been an increase in the number of patients registering utilisation is still look.

We are undertaking a joint project with the integrated care board to ascertain why uptake is poor:

* Whether this is to do with:
* Language barriers
* Lack of access /  cost of equipment to use  a digital platform
* Ease of use
* Preference
* Confusion in which app to use and why.

Whilst it is key for people still to be able to call their GP surgery Healthwatch Sandwell feel that it is fundamental that patients are aware of what services are available through their GP practice and that there are a variety of options available to book appointments, results, follow ups, medication etc

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| **Date** | **Group & Number Engaged** | **Detail** | **Outcome / Rationale** |
| 9th and 11th April | Integrated Care Board | Initial Meetings | Meetings with members of the Intergraded Care System to discuss partnership involvement in digital access and inequalities work programme. |
| 16th April | Friends of Dartmouth Park  (70) | General Awareness Rasing of Healthwatch Sandwell | Presentation to over 70 members of Friends of Group. Updates given from questions around GP Recovery Plan, and MMUH and how this will impact of Sandwell hospital. |
| 24th April | Sandwell Health and Care Partnership  (10) | Closer Working Relationships | As members of Sandwell Place, the ICS, public health, adult social care, safeguarding and Healthwatch Sandwell held their bimonthly meeting. This was in order to discuss, closer working relationship, sharing reports through the NHS insight library, priorities for tis group and feeding mechanism to and from the partnership board. |
| 29th May | Foster caring Voices Heard Event  (20) | Celebration of Foster caring in Sandwell and Networking. | Invited to attend a Foster Carers and fostered children’s celebration event. Engaged with a number of foster carers who informed us of some of the challenges in foster or becoming a foster parent:  Report has been published and sent to key stakeholders involved in service delivery. |
| 9th June | Orchard and Meadow SEND Schools | Meeting with Pastoral Leads to arrange engagement with parents and carers | From some conversations with some parents trying to access EHCP’s we want to talk to parents and carers around the care and support that they receive  In the initial meetings we were informed that many children do don’t received the local offer and mainstream healthcare issues. Planning to arrange to talk to parent groups once school term has started but also to look at ways to contact parents during school holidays to discuss resources and care provision. |
| 10th June | Eastern European Welfare Association | Polish Community Accessing Appointments, services and care | Meeting with the Manager of EWA at the YMCA in west Bromwich, raise awareness of Healthwatch Sandwell but also give insight into some of the challenges faced within the Polish community, loss of faith in UTC at Sandwell Hospital and also going back to Poland to get over the counter medication in Poland such as antibiotics.  Many Polish ladies choose to go back to Poland to give birth and they feels that the quality of care is much better. |
| 11th June | Carers Team Market Place  (15) | Networking Opportunity | Arrangements made to meet up with Sandwell Parents of Disabled Children to capture carer and family stories.  Also engaged with Sandwell Young Carers, arrangements to be made to talk to young carers around caring responsibilities, support and challenges. |
| 26th June | Sandwell Council Men’s Health Event  (50) | Healthwatch Sandwell promotion and engagement opportunity. | A range of heath initiatives and advice at Sandwell Council Men’s Health event. Intelligence gathered around GP access and the use of digital platforms to arrange appointments. |
| 2nd July | Portway Family Practice | Digital Access and Inequalities Project | Discussion with the Practice Manager and PCN Lead on the partnership.  PCN lead to raise the Healthwatch digital access projects at borough PCN Lead meeting. |
| 4th July | Sandwell Hospital general outreach.  (30) | General awareness raising of Healthwatch Sandwell | Opportunity to talk to staff and patients around the care provided at Sandwell hospital, appointments. Staff member highlighted issue around staff not feeding vulnerable patients but also spending too much time on social media during work hours.  Adult safeguarding raised around a ladies care at home and the care provider. |
| 6th July | Cancer Support Event  (30) | Opportunity for Healthwatch Promotion and intelligence gathering | West Bromwich Albion Football Ground over 200 local people and carers affected by Cancer. A range of health and wellness opportunities. Intel gathered around care pathways from GP, communication and issues with some breast prosthetics in relation to ethnicity and colouring. |
| 9th July | Bangladeshi Men’s and Women’s ESOL Groups  (25) | Digital Access Project | Talking to 2 groups of Bangladeshi men and women around digital GP access, NHS app use and booking appointments.  Training to be arranged around using digital apps in September with the groups and ICB digital lead. |