
 Brent  North West London	Brent Health and Wellbeing Board 28 July 2022
	Report from Healthwatch Brent
Progress update Healthwatch Brent 2022	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Non-Key Decision
Open or Part/Fully Exempt:	Open
No. of Appendices:	Appendix 1 - Annual Report 2021-22 Appendix 2 - Patient Experience Q1 2022-23
Background Papers	None
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Jo Kay Healthwatch Brent Manager jo.kay@healthwatchbrent.co.uk

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide members of the Brent Health and Wellbeing Board (BHWB) with an update on progress in the development of the Healthwatch Brent work service
- 1.2 The Healthwatch service aims to ensure that all residents in the borough, particularly the most vulnerable, are able to influence the commissioning and delivery of the health and social care service in Brent

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 To recognise and note the key themes and achievements in the development of the Healthwatch Service.
- 2.2 To note Healthwatch Brent annual report 2021-22 and to celebrate the achievements, successes and impact with the Health and Wellbeing Board.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The body of this report to The London Borough of Brent's Health and Wellbeing Board summarises the outcomes, impacts and progress made by Healthwatch Brent in the delivery of its functions and activities for this period.
- 3.2 **Annual Report 2021-22**

In addition to reporting on quarter one 2022-23 this report also outlines Healthwatch Brent's annual performance. We have appendix our Annual Report for submission to the Health and Wellbeing Board which encapsulates the key elements of our activities and financial position in 2021-22.

3.3 Healthwatch Brent would wish to draw the Health and Wellbeing Board's attention to some of the outcomes highlighted by its work during the first quarter.

3.4 **Engagement**

In quarter one Healthwatch Brent have engaged with 287 members of the public via several different engagement approaches. There have been several issues and areas which we have covered, which have produced some very positive outcomes for Brent residents. Such as residents being aware that they have the right to an independent advocate to get the information they need to make real choices about their circumstances and support to ensure they can put their choices across to others. Registering and accessing an NHS Dentist or making a complaint against a GP surgery.

Some of our engagement events have consisted of visits to Daniel's Den, to hear from parents with young children. Mental Health Awareness Day run by Thrive to hear from communities about their experiences with mental health services. Visits to Laurence's Larder and Brent Foodbank to hear from members of the public experiencing deprivation. We have supported the Black Community Action Plan as part of the steering group for their upcoming health awareness day.

We are continuing to enhance the way in which we collect experiences and will be attending various health and social care providers to ensure we have a greater presence in the community and are collecting feedback about different providers. Most feedback on health and social care services remains positive with 72% of overall service rating is either good or okay and only 27% of feedback being poor or very poor. The most common theme is access to services or quality of service or treatment.

3.5 **Strategic involvement**

Through reports, direct feedback and the large number of strategic meetings to which Healthwatch contributes we are able to feedback the information that we gather through our engagement programme, to commissioners and providers. This ensures that the quality of health and social care services in Brent is monitored and challenged through the real experiences of patients and that change programmes can be influenced by Brent's residents.

3.6 **Themes**

Through our engagement work we would like to draw attention to the following key themes identified. Further analysis can be seen in appendix 2: Q1 Patient Feedback Report.

3.7 **GP access**

We are generally hearing positive feedback about the quality of treatment and care that GP surgeries provide however we still continually hear about lack of access to GP appointments, long telephone waiting times and once able to book an

appointment there is usually a 2-3 week wait. We have shared an example of a case which came to us from the NHS Independent Complaints Advocacy Service at the end of this paper, highlighting the issues that some patients have had with long waiting times and a lack of understanding/respect from staff.

3.8 Dentistry

Like all local Healthwatch, Healthwatch Brent have received an increase to our single point of access from people unable to find an NHS dentist. Access to NHS dentistry has been one of the most significant issues raised with Healthwatch across England by the public over the last 18 months. Many people find it hard to get up-to-date information about which practices are taking on new patients because NHS and dentists' websites aren't updated regularly. As a result, more people are contacting their local Healthwatch hoping that they'd provide them with accurate information. It is often the most vulnerable people in our society, including children, disabled people and those living in care homes, who are suffering the most.

NHS dentistry should be in the frontline of tackling health inequalities and at the moment it is not working as patients are not only unable to get an appointment, but unable to register with a dentist at all. This means that those with the resources to do so are turning to private practices or travelling further afield to access dental care, while the most vulnerable members of our society are left without any access to services. We would like to know what is being done to address the concerns being raised about the lack of NHS dentist accepting new patients in Brent, keeping in mind the commitment from North West London to reducing inequalities in health outcomes, in access and in experience, all of which are only exacerbated by the current issues around dentistry.

3.9 Children and Young People's mental health

We are encouraged to see a renewed commitment to working together to improve services for children experiencing mental health problems. We are pleased that an in-depth engagement and evidence gathering by Young Brent Foundation has been undertaken and the findings from this work have been published in the report *Understanding the Issues/Challenges on Mental Health of Communities During the Pandemic – 2021*¹. The report gives insight into the experiences of children, young people and their families which we are hoping will influence and inform how future services are developed and designed.

However, we would like to raise and amplify the key challenges the report highlighted from an organisational point of view: Anxiety, low self-esteem, self-care and a decrease in social skills. From a young person's perspective: Loneliness, isolation (from friends), depression, mood swings, Domestic Violence (young person towards parental unit). Autistic young people are also adversely impacted by isolation and or anxiety. From a child (5-11) perspective: Effects on physical fitness, weight gain, dealing with bereavement, and children having to adapt in new school environment / transitioning back into school or moving.

We look forward to working together with all partners to improve and evaluate services which have been put in place to improve the outcomes for the children and young people of Brent.

¹ <https://youngbrentfoundation.org.uk/entry/mental-health-and-wellbeing-report>

3.10 Maternity Services in Brent

Since the CQC report on Northwick Park Maternity Services was published in 2021 we have paid particular attention to London Northwest University Healthcare NHS Trust maternity engagement strategy. We've heard from Brent residents that they have not had opportunities to feedback to the Trust on the improvements to maternity services to ensure all women from diverse communities can receive safe and equal treatment. We have met with the Director of Midwifery, midwifery nursing staff and the Head of Patient Experience to seek assurances from the Trust that they will be engaging with Brent's diverse communities and use different engagement methods to ensure the information shared informs and influences the improvements to the services. We are pleased that significant progress has been made and we will continue to monitor this directly through our engagement work.

3.11 The Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment for Brent

Healthwatch Brent have continued supporting the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA) steering group to ensure patient voice is amplified in the PNA. We have reviewed the draft PNA to ensure it meets the needs of Brent residents and will be reaching out to patients and the voluntary sector to feedback on the consultation of the draft PNA in Quarter two.

3.12 Future Plans

April 2022 marked the end of the first year of The Advocacy Project being the contract host for Healthwatch Brent. We are taking a time to reflect on this period and review our service against Healthwatch England's Quality Framework. Drawing on our own experiences and methodologies, we will be looking at how we can be smarter in proactively seeking out the opinions and experiences of people using care services in the borough, particularly from seldom-heard groups. Our focus will also be on how we use this evidence base to challenge care provision in more innovative ways. We recognise that there are significant challenges ahead of us to make sure that the residents of Brent have a voice, at neighbourhood, place and now system level in the changing context of the health and social care landscape of newly established Integrated Care Systems.

Our intention will be to work strategically with the Integrated Care Partnerships to hold commissioners and providers to account during these changes; To firstly ensure that they carry out robust engagement with the public to allow residents to influence and shape future care services; and secondly, that the quality of care is not negatively affected and that health inequalities are addressed as set out in the Brent Integrated Care Partnership Executive Committee priority area of focus.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 No immediate financial implications

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 No immediate financial implications

6.0 Equality Implications

- 6.1 The Healthwatch Service has been assessed against the Equality and Diversity Policy so that it ensures we are fully committed to and undertaking action under the Equality Act 2010 and other forms of legislation that combat discrimination and promotes equality and diversity.

Case highlight report.

Access to GP Services

We would like to highlight a case which came to us from the NHS Independent Complaints Advocacy Service to demonstrate long waiting telephone times and the lack of understanding and respect for patients.

The advocacy service is providing independent complaints support for a patient, as the patient first complained to their GP surgery in April 2021 and had not received a response. The patient's complaints advocate called the surgery to discuss the non-response a few times. The first time, they were on hold for 33 minutes (14 minutes of that time they were 'next in line' to speak to someone), the second time on hold for close to 40 minutes and the third time they were cut off after 12 minutes. This raises a query regarding access to make an appointment if the telephone is your only means, let alone speak to someone about a complaint.

Only when the advocate found an email address to make contact, and only after suggesting they would contact NHS England and the Ombudsman as the GP surgery is not adhering to NHS guidance and legislation in line with the NHS Complaints Procedure 2009, did they get a response. Unfortunately this response stated that the practice had never received the complaint. The advocate followed up with evidence that they had indeed received the complaint, and even acknowledged receiving it. Within 5 minutes they had a response apologising and confirming that they would now investigate. Nonetheless, a very painful experience for the patient.

A quick google search identifies the surgery as having 1.9 stars due to patient feedback - the majority of which refer to the impossibility of getting through on the phone lines and the rudeness and unprofessionalism of the staff. The wider issue, despite the complaints concerns, is that unwell people are not able to access their GP surgery – it is unreasonable to expect an unwell person to wait for 40 minutes and to get through to speak to someone.

This is only highlighting one piece of feedback we have received. When trying to improve and build better systems for patients and staff it is essential to listen to their voice and collaborate with those who use services and those that provide them. Therefore, Healthwatch Brent stresses the importance of ensuring the key priorities set by NHS England 2022-23 to improve timely access to primary care by maximizing the impact of the investment in primary care and Primary Care Networks, to extend capacity, increasing the number of appointments available and driving integrated working at neighbourhood and place level.

Report sign off:

Judith Davey CEO, Healthwatch Brent

