

## Report from Healthwatch Portsmouth Manager

### Coronavirus

Further to my report to the December Board meeting Healthwatch Portsmouth (HWP) has been striving to provide information to the public about available services and support and to gather feedback on people's experiences of health and social care during this unprecedented period of COVID-19. We have been taking part in online strategic level meetings, being the 'voice of the patient' in discussions and decision making. It has been an extremely challenging period and while the vaccine programme is in full flow the need for retaining some social distancing measures remains until the summer.

Cases had spiked in January with QA Hospital treating 561 patients but numbers have been decreasing overall to more manageable levels with the odd short term increase.

Care home deaths spiked in January, higher than in the previous peak in 2020. PCC say that lessons have been learned from what happened both nationally and locally and they changed their guidance to care homes accordingly regarding the use of Personal Protective Equipment and Infection Prevention and Control.

If there is a need to deploy surge testing in Portsmouth, the Local Outbreak Engagement Committee said there was a plan in place for the council to organise this. The Director of Public Health for Portsmouth City Council (PCC) said it was to be expected that COVID-19 would be part of our lives for at least the next year. The Portsmouth City Guildhall is being used as a Community Testing Centre to offer lateral flow tests for asymptomatic key workers to be tested twice a week if they have contact with the public. The council has submitted a bid for another community testing centre, possibly as a mobile unit, to be run by PCC staff.

Portsmouth Test and Trace service is currently running at 88% success in contacts made. HIVE Portsmouth volunteers are offering follow-up support to the over 70s in the city. It has been estimated recently by HIVE Portsmouth that approximately £500,000 worth of volunteer hours has been provided by the community to support people through the COVID-19 pandemic. Volunteering in Portsmouth is said to have been far higher than the national average in 2020.

### COVID Vaccination programme 2021

Information has been provided to the public on our website, using the latest weekly updates provided to Healthwatch. **In early March over 547,000 COVID vaccinations have been issued in the Hampshire and Isle of Wight (inc. Portsmouth) area.**

At the time of writing the Vaccination programme has reached through to group 6 of priority groups (care home residents and staff • people aged 80+, frontline health and social care workers • ages 75+ , ages 70+ and clinically extremely vulnerable individuals, people aged 65+ and people aged 16 to 65 and in a clinically identified at risk group) and will extend its vaccination programme further to group 7 (over 60s) during March, with letters going out to people aged 55 - 60 due out soon.

QA Hospital has been running a Vaccination Hub for booked appointments and in-patients who are eligible and well enough to be transported in chair to the hub.

There have been a series of vaccination briefings for the community from NHSE stating how the programme is progressing, which age groups and vulnerable sectors of the community are being invited to attend a vaccination appointment, what issues have been raised and how best the NHS and the communities affected can tackle them. A big topic has been the concern raised by Black and Minority Ethnic Communities (BAME) to having the vaccine due to religious beliefs, suspicion of the vaccine itself, specific cultural issues and worries that people with traits of particular health conditions could be worsened by having the vaccine in their system. A range of seminars/question and answer discussion groups were held in mid and late February to discuss the issues and identify ways to overcome barriers for people to receive the vaccine. The key issues and outcomes from the meetings we were able to attend were:

[BAME Covid-19 Workshop 10th Feb 2021](#)

[BAME COVID-19 seminar RHO Feb 11th 2021](#)

From 24<sup>th</sup> February **all people with a Learning Disability** will be able to eligible to have a COVID vaccination now within the 'priority group 6'.

At the end of February, Solent NHS Trust started a 7 day trial 'walk-in vaccination centre' at St James' Hospital for anyone:

- aged 64+
- is receipt of a Carer's Allowance \* and the
- clinically extremely vulnerable by bringing proof of ID/eligibility

who would like to have a COVID vaccination - they will **not** need to make an appointment (via NHS telephone, GP or online booking scheme). This initiative, which was extended to 10 days has resulted from the vaccination centre being significantly under-utilised in Portsmouth and staff wanting to offer as many people as possible in the currently eligible categories to have access to a vaccination. Solent tell us that drop drop-in sessions helped encourage those who were concerned about going online to book an appt via NHS or to phone the national booking system to take up the opportunity they had been offered in their NHS letter stating they were eligible. Solent anticipate that when they invite people from the younger age groups that there will be a high take-up and that all the available booking slots (8am -8pm 7 days a week) will be taken up. Solent are making provision for single parents who do not have alternative arrangements to have their children looked after while they are receiving their vaccine to be

able to bring them along to the appointment where they will be accommodated in family-friendly room.

A virtual tour of St James' Vaccination Hub has been filmed by Meridian TV and is available [here](#) to view. It's the first virtual tour of its kind and has been praised by NHSE for its accessibility. Solent have been working with Enable-ability to publicise this resource.

## Vaccinating unpaid carers

We are raising awareness of the opportunity for people who look after someone older or clinically vulnerable who couldn't cope without their help that they could be eligible for the Covid-19 vaccine as one of the next priority groups. If you receive Carers Allowance or you're already registered with your GP as an unpaid carer\* then the person will automatically receive an invite to book a vaccination appointment.

\*Healthwatch Portsmouth has challenged the decision to offer vaccinations only to carers who are registered or in receipt of the Carers Allowance. Some carers may simply not be registered or claiming but would be eligible. The Carers Centre in Portsmouth has worked on a process to help check if a carer would be eligible to receive a COVID vaccination at this time if they are not already registered in some way on the national booking system. The Carers Centre in Portsmouth is encouraging carers who may not be receiving the Carers Allowance, or are not registered as a carer with their GP, but are identified as 'the sole carer', to contact them on [carerscentre@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:carerscentre@portsmouthcc.gov.uk) or calling 023 9285 1864 so they can check if the carer is eligible and organise their registration to receive a vaccination.

## Healthwatch England intelligence on COVID vaccinations uptake

### Healthwatch England posting 16.2.21

Data is gathered from 35 local Health and responses from 2,341 members of the public to a Healthwatch England survey.

Headlines are that 15% had had the vaccine already,

53% said they would definitely get vaccinated,

13% said they would probably get vaccinated,

6% said they **probably wouldn't** get vaccinated,

6 % said they would **definitely not** get vaccinated,

7% were not sure.

Of the people who said they would not, or probably would not get vaccinated:

44% said they did not think the vaccine would be safe/effective

42% said they were concerned about the ingredients used in it

38% said they wanted to wait until others have had it first

31% said they don't trust the intentions behind the vaccine

18% said they did not think coronavirus poses enough risk to them

11% said they were against vaccines in general

6% said they cannot be vaccinated for health reasons

2% said they are against the vaccine for community reasons

2% said they are against the vaccine for family reasons

9% said they had another reason not listed  
5% said they didn't know

NHSE are working on a series of communications to inform and engage with the majority of that 12% of the population who are yet to be convinced of the need to have the vaccine. Some members of the public cannot be vaccinated for health reasons.

NHS services have continued to experience seismic changes since December as the virus transition increased dramatically. HWP has continued to challenge the NHS Trusts providing care and commissioners of services to patients in Portsmouth to ensure that information on the availability of services and how it is provided is kept up to date since so much of what the public were trying to find out is only accessible via websites and social media. Our recently published report on HWP's review of GP surgery websites indicates that there is a huge variation in the amount of information that patients can obtain from different GP surgeries across the city. We have had a positive response from Portsmouth Clinical Commissioning Group (PCCG) regarding our report's recommendations and will have by the end of the month undertaken a follow-up view to find out what has improved.

**Current new cases of COVID-19 in a 7 day period** (from late Feb to early March) in Portsmouth was **172**. The rate of infection has fallen dramatically since mid Jan.

There have been 266 Covid-19 related deaths recorded in Portsmouth since the end of October. There have been **4 deaths in the last 7 days**, and 346 deaths in total. The number of deaths (on a 3-day average) in early March was 1, whereas at the peak (end Jan) it was 8 deaths on a 3-day average.

## **We Said - You Did :**

For the period January and March, here are the key changes we achieved in service delivery or service planning as a result of patient and user feedback and our escalation:

(A full report of the impact of COVID-19 that local people have provided feedback to us on is being produced and will be published on our website. )

### **Jan - March**

PCC forwarded our suggestion to public health comms team that they ask staff fluent in the most commonly used minority ethnic languages in Portsmouth to record guidance in a range of community languages to raise awareness of the need for compliance with national guidelines on preventing the spread of COVID-19.

Portsmouth CCG will be asking GP surgeries in Portsmouth to update their websites to provide more information to patients on a range of topics highlighted in Healthwatch Portsmouth's report from their survey conducted on patient access to information on GP surgery websites.

The CCG to require all GP surgery websites to include:

- A statement that patients do need to have any identification to register with a GP practice
- Provide the 5 key COVID-19 prevention measures for patients in face-to-face appointments
- Provide information about Out Of Hours service provision

Portsmouth CCG have asked if we could do a quick review before the end of March of progress made on improving the information available to patients on GP surgery websites

## Message received from Healthwatch England policy department

“I thought I would share this with you all as evidence of our collective impact. It is the annual appraisal letter the Secretary of State publishes reflecting on how well NHSE has done each year. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nhs-england-assessment-of-performance-2019-to-2020/assessment-of-nhs-england-the-nhs-commissioning-board-for-2019-to-2020?>

There are three direct references to work Healthwatch have done that has supported / influenced NHSE thinking this year:

- The work on the **clinical review of standards**, in particular on A&E targets, and how we have kept the process focus on improving patient experience. **Big thanks to the six local healthwatch who helped with this work. You can see the report here.** <https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/.../what-matters-people...>

- How we have provided insights into how changes in hospital discharge have affected people during the pandemic. I know lots of you contributed to this so big thanks. <https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/.../hospital-discharge-must...>

- And the introduction of six week maternal mental health checks which have been introduced following our engagement on maternity and mental health issues conducted by the network in 2019. <https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/.../how-your-views-have...>

There is also reference to three other areas which are worth noting:

- The Secretary of State also “commends NHSE/I for commissioning a review of patient transport services to help people get to and from NHS appointments”. This obviously followed our calls for action so is good to see. <https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/.../more-focus-needed-how...>

- Sec of State also “encourage continued engagement with patients on the use of technology to ensure that the changes actioned in this area meet their needs.” This was one of the main asks of the **Dr Zoom work**. <https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/.../doctor-will-zoom-you...>

- On NHS recovery, particularly around elective care, the letter says “Building on this work I am keen to ensure that NHSE/I continue to take account of feedback from patients, improving how they are kept informed about impacts on their care, and increasing the focus on interim support for those who may have to wait longer.” This directly reflects the language and the points we have been making on the national Elective Care Taskforce through

Thanks everyone for your contributions to all this work. We couldn't influence national policy thinking in this way without your efforts. Keep sharing your feedback and insights with us, it is making a difference."

## **Strategic matters**

Healthwatch Portsmouth Board members and I have been busy representing the views of patients and the public of Portsmouth in a wide range of strategic level meetings across the city during this COVID-19 period, participating in online hosted meetings and calls.

We have made an impact with the Portsmouth University Hospitals Trust and in particular on the Trust's Shared Assurance Improvement Programme. Healthwatch has also made significant contributions at a strategic level in the following groups and committees:

Portsmouth Mental Health Military Alliance, COVID-19 Mental Health Alliance and its Community Engagement Sub Group, Positive Minds steering group, the Learning Disability Partnership Board, Portsmouth Adults Safeguarding Board, Portsmouth University's graduate health and social care recruitment programme, the University's Patient and Service User Forum, Portsmouth City Council's Health and Wellbeing Board, Portsmouth City Councils' Local Resilience Forum Health Protection Board's Local Engagement Board Portsmouth Clinical Commissioning Group's Primary Care Commissioning Committee, Solent NHS Trusts' Community Engagement Committee and the Patient Family Carer Collaborative (PHUT).

Healthwatch Portsmouth held a Closed Board meeting (in 2 parts in February) to go through the draft responses to the HWE Quality Framework, Healthwatch Portsmouth's list of strategic committees it attends and the updated Annual Workplan for activities in the second half of the activity year (July 20 - March 21)

## **Operational matters**

### **Healthwatch Portsmouth Contract**

Portsmouth City Council have confirmed their awarding of a contract for the next 3 years to a host organisation for Healthwatch Portsmouth which will be The Advocacy People. The Service will transfer on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

We heard the news in mid' February. There has been a great deal for the staff team to undertake in the meantime while projects and activities are completed or arrangements made to put things on hold. I would personally like to thank the HWP Board members and HWP Volunteers for all their support in helping Healthwatch Portsmouth achieve what it does.

## Healthwatch Portsmouth Annual Workplan - March final update

The Healthwatch Portsmouth Workplan for 20-21 has been subject to very many updates as we have responded swiftly to the health and care environment in which we are working. The most recent and updated edition of the workplan can be accessed [HERE](#) .

## Healthwatch Portsmouth Quality Framework 2020-2021

We have managed to make great progress on completing the responses from Healthwatch Portsmouth and producing our local response ready for Healthwatch England. I would like to thank Help and Care and HWP Board members for supporting this activity so comprehensively. We will have met the deadline for submission of 31<sup>st</sup> March.

## Healthwatch Portsmouth Volunteers

Have been gathering feedback from their networks and providing intelligence on what is happening locally and the impact that COVID-19 is having on patients' access to local health and care services. The results of the deskbased review were published in early December.

[GP surgery website review: HWP report FINAL Nov 20](#) The collated data appears [Data Table 1](#)

The [Appendix to the GP Website Review](#) report was completed and submitted in January to the Portsmouth Clinical Commissioning Group Primary Care Commissioning Committee (PCCGPCCC). Discussion flowed on the findings from the review, with agreement for corrections to be made to information displayed on several GP surgery's websites that patients wishing to register needed to provide up to 2 forms of personal ID. This is not a requirement made by NHS England and is as stated in NHSE guidance dating from 2017.

The remainder of our findings were discussed in a follow-up meeting held in early February with a commitment from the CCG to require all GP surgeries to include:

- A statement that patients do need to have any identification to register with a GP practice
- Provide the 5 key COVID-19 prevention measures for patients in face-to-face appointments
- Provide information about Out Of Hours service provision

HWP has responded to Healthwatch England's initiative with NHS England which includes the request for local HW to distribute new cards that have been issued by NHSE to support patients to feel confident to exercise their right to register with a GP surgery. HWP has ordered 500 'My Right To Register' cards to distribute, primarily via the Portsmouth City Council's Homelessness Unit to support vulnerable people to register for access to healthcare that they are entitled to. HWP is very pleased to hear that NHSE is now working with general practices on patient registration, offering training for reception staff, often the first point of contact for people wanting to register.

Portsmouth CCG discussed our observations about the difficulty reviewers had had in accessing and using E-consult.

Portsmouth CCG have asked if we could do a quick review by the end of March of progress made on improving the information available to patients on GP surgery websites and do a full review later in 2021.

## Investors In Volunteers Award

In early February, Help and Care (the host organisation for Healthwatch Portsmouth) has achieved the Investors in Volunteers (IIV) award.

Help & Care began its journey towards IIV in 2018 by inviting a representative from NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations) to attend a management meeting to present the criteria of the Standard. Following this meeting, a major review of volunteering focused on developing consistent practice before registering for the Award. Help and Care was assessed on several different topics such as volunteer involvement, commitment to our volunteers, communication, satisfaction and many more.

The assessment process included interviewing a staff member (either a Volunteer Lead or Service Manager) for each area of volunteer involvement, as well as a small group of volunteers from each area. Most volunteer interviews took place in small groups via Zoom, supplemented by a small number of one-to-one phone calls. This approach meant that at least two volunteers from each area of involvement were interviewed.

### Some of Help and Care's strengths highlighted from the assessor's report:

- Their expressed commitment to the involvement of volunteers, and recognition throughout the organisation that volunteering is a two-way process which benefits volunteers and the organisation
- Their strong commitment to ensuring that volunteers had their own needs met
- Their help to fulfil people's reasons for volunteering; considerable flexibility as to how volunteers can contribute with no pressure to do more than they want to; scope to develop different ways of getting involved based on issues that mattered to them
- Volunteers said that they felt valued in their roles and gave examples of the different ways in which staff expressed their appreciation of their contribution

The Healthwatch Portsmouth staff team wants to wish you all huge congratulations, this is an achievement that you all have attained as a volunteer and without you this would not have been possible. You have all been going above and beyond recently during the pandemic and we are glad that your efforts have been recognised!"

Help and Care will continue to develop its volunteering recruitment, support and deployment activities throughout 2021 and will bring you further news as it becomes available.

### Healthwatch Portsmouth's digital reach during COVID-19 pandemic March 20 - Feb 21

Month	Mar	Apr	My	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Totals
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<b>Facebook</b> Page views of our page	251	229	173	89	91	136	229	161	165	95	92	90	<b>1,801</b>
FB new followers (liked page)	+27	+10	+11	+11	+3	+13	+33	+20	+18	+7	+8	+9	<b>167</b>
FB post reach (People see our posts)	3192	246	556	832	469	1299	907	2613	4296	3522	2564	2739	<b>23,235</b>
Fb post engagement: people who interact with post	507	372	631	760	448	518	424	2693	1279	392	2651	2096	<b>12,771</b>
<b>Twitter</b> Impressions (People see our posts)	4988	4014	7397	3941	7007	9307	2554	4146	8866	7945	9087	14900	<b>83,799</b>
New Twitter Followers	0	+6	+4	+2	+9	+3	+15	+1	+82	+9	+14	+22	<b>250</b>
Twitter Retweets (shared our posts)	11	16	8	11	11	3	5	16	13	25	8	36	<b>170</b>
HWP Twitter page visits	106	106	63	66	40	22	110	110	483	611	463	779	<b>2914</b>
<b>Our social media presence March '20 - Feb 2021</b>	9082	4999	8843	5712	8078	11301	4277	9760	15202	12693	14887	20671	<b>125,107</b>

This total reach on social media for Healthwatch represents **125% increase** from last year.

Particular stories or campaigns such as the What Matters Most to Unpaid Carers attracted a lot of views on our postings (14,000 via Twitter in February)

Our website traffic increased: Jan (1,021 visits) Feb (2,200 visits) up from 874 visits in Dec.

## Independent NHS Complaints Advocacy Service

We have been continuing to support clients in Portsmouth who have a range of complaints, some have been resolved by further discussion between client and NHS ( i.e through discussion and direction to PALs). Some complaints have not progressed as the client has not gone on to engage, i.e. not returning consent forms or deciding not to follow through/withdrawing, sometimes due to not being able to be 'seen in person' to discuss their complaint.

Topics include access to GP services for medication reviews, the commissioning of specific services such as for Aggressive Fibromatosis (a chronic condition affecting finger nails which results in excessive growth). Patients unable to access community-based care are having to seek emergency nail care treatment in the hospital Emergency Department if they are unable to

manage their condition using the self-help guide on Portsmouth CCG's website. This patient story highlights the need for NHS resources to be used differently to support community-based care. Other Advocacy service clients have complained that they have faced difficulty arranging hospital appointments for maternity scans outside of working hours, planning and managing hospital discharge, accessing services relating to breast density, access to antenatal care due to the client not having an EU Settlement letter in time, information on mental health diagnosis, treatment options and discharge to primary care, removal of regular contact with a client's Community Psychiatric Nurse and access to long standing support and a poor experience of the NHS complaint processes used by CARE UK.

At the national level the Parliamentary Health Services Ombudsman (PHSO) is working towards publishing 'anonymised' reports of their reviews of NHS complaints that have been sent to them by complainants once the local complaints process has been completed. The anticipated new national Complaints Framework for NHS Trusts to follow has not yet been published further to the national consultation they undertook last summer.

## Mental Health

### Military Mental Health Alliance - Hampshire and Isle of Wight

In late December we publicised the link to the new High Intensity Service that Solent NHS is providing <https://www.solent.nhs.uk/media/2659/veterans-leaflet-a5-11-dec-2020.pdf>

At the end of 2020 the development of a new High Intensity Service Veterans Community Response Team (VCRT) was discussed between the partners (NHS Solent, All Call Signs & Forgotten Veterans UK) and facilitated by HWP Vice Chairperson. It was resolved in January that the Armed Forces Covenant money, held in trust for a VCRT, will be used to develop a bespoke training package to support volunteer veterans to qualify as support workers with Mental Health awareness skills.

This means that Forgotten Veterans UK (FVUK) will continue to develop its Quick Reaction Force (QRF) without duplication elsewhere. All Call Signs and Positive Minds (which is now offering support to veterans across HIOW) will work together to help FVUK to help support the QRF volunteer group.

The next step is to determine the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) set-up and collaborative working between the statutory and voluntary sector.

## Positive Minds

We were planning, at the (already postponed) meeting in late December, to be raising our concerns about the stated plans to change the purpose of the drop-in centre. Unfortunately the postponed meeting was cancelled in December without a re-scheduled date for the New Year offered. We then heard in early February of new plans to offer the drop-in service (based in the centre of Portsmouth) for the benefit of veterans and families of serving personnel in the wider Portsmouth, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight areas. We welcome additional mental health support that is to be provided in the city for veterans and families of serving personnel. We are yet to receive information though whether additional funding has been allocated to help teams to provide support (online at present due to COVID-19) to the anticipated additional demand from veterans and families or whether current resources are to be stretched to meet a wider beneficiary group and whether this will result in waiting lists for support being set up.

## Community

### Domestic Abuse bill (to be introduced later in 2021)

Local authorities across England have been allocated £125m to provide support and accommodation for domestic abuse survivors and their children.

Local authorities across England will get an additional £125m to support people who have experienced domestic abuse #UKhousing.

Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Secretary, Eddie Hughes announced in February that the government would be providing the extra funding to ensure people who have been affected by domestic abuse can access safe accommodation as well as therapy, advice and counselling. The funding comes ahead of the Domestic Abuse Bill to be introduced later this year, which puts requirements on local authorities to ensure that those affected can access life-saving support in safe accommodation. It was initially mooted in the government's Spending Review last year.

It is the latest bit of funding that the government has put towards supporting those impacted by rape and domestic abuse in recent months. ( Earlier in February the Government announced it would be providing £40m to support victim support services, while in May last year £76m was put towards ensuring vital services including refuges, helplines and counselling remain accessible. Other measures have included the introduction of the 'Ask for ANI' codeword scheme, which provides victims of domestic abuse access to immediate help from the police or other support services from their local pharmacy. The scheme is available nationwide in all Boots pharmacies - (approx 2,300 stores - and in almost 300 independent pharmacies).

Eddie Hughes said: "Domestic abuse is a heinous crime which threatens the lives of victims in their own homes where they should feel safe. So it's right that we're giving victims support in safe accommodation and providing councils with money to deliver essential services that will help them and their children rebuild their lives. This is part of a long-term strategy to provide broader support for domestic abuse victims both in safe accommodation, like refuges, and in their own homes."

## Pharmacy

Healthwatch Portsmouth received notice on 15<sup>th</sup> February that NHS England has approved the change of ownership application for Lloyds Pharmacy at 145-147 Somers Road, Portsmouth, Hampshire, PO5 4PT from Tibbs Healthcare Limited.

## Learning Disabilities

Learning Disability Partnership Board - February newsletter

[Learning Disability Partnership Board newsletter 9 February 2021](#)

## Autism

Healthwatch Portsmouth attended the February meeting of the Portsmouth Autism Forum and heard that young person's group 'Dynamite' were going to be doing a live streamed Question & Answer session about the Covid vaccination - [www.facebook.com/dynamiteportsmouth](https://www.facebook.com/dynamiteportsmouth)

In addition, a proposal was made for autistic people to be offered annual health checks. The GP responsible for autism through at Portsmouth CCG is Dr Nick More. We may hear about this later in the spring and will keep the Board updated.

To support this initiative, it was suggested at the meeting that information was provided to GP surgeries, possibly delivered at a TARGET meeting? (regular update events for GPs) to raise awareness of autism - an idea which had come from the Annual GP Patient Survey.

## Wessex Cancer Alliance feedback gathering : February - March

Starting on 18<sup>th</sup> February, World Cancer Day, Wessex Cancer Alliance launched their new Public Involvement Network for patients, carers or people who have been affected by cancer and would

like to get involved with shaping cancer services and support in Dorset, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton.

An online event is being organised for today, 11<sup>th</sup> March, or for people unable to attend an [online form](#) has been created for people to give their feedback.

Wessex Cancer Alliance's Patient, Carer and Public Involvement Network involves a diverse range of people from across Dorset, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Working together with the Wessex Cancer Alliance, members volunteer to get involved in plans to improve cancer services and support for our residents, ranging from how to keep people well; making sure more people get an early diagnosis of cancer to give them a chance of better outcomes; to improving people's care and support through and beyond their treatment. For more information about the Network click on [Involvement Network](#)

## Dental Services in Portsmouth

HWP provided patient feedback in early January to Stephen Morgan MP (Portsmouth South) who met with representatives of the British Dental Association local Board, dental commissioning hub and Healthwatch Portsmouth. We described the local pressures we were hearing about. Two days later the intelligence we provided was included in a parliamentary speech delivered by Stephen Morgan.

*Parliamentary debate 14<sup>th</sup> January extract:*

*"I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the increasingly urgent problems with dental care in my constituency. Portsmouth is a densely populated city, and pre-existing problems with patient access and the retention and recruitment of dentists have been exacerbated by this pandemic. Figures from the BDA suggest that 43% of adults in Portsmouth had seen a NHS dentist in the past two years up to June 2020, compared with 48% across England. Figures also show that the fall in the proportion of patients seen in my city during the pandemic has been greater than the average across England. I am very concerned that Portsmouth has been disproportionately affected by the weakness of the current contract system, and that we face the prospect of generational damage to patient care.*

*The recently imposed NHS activity cut targets are particularly illogical, with practices facing steep financial penalties if they fail to hit 45% of their pre-pandemic NHS activity during the current quarter. Those targets effectively force NHS practices to prioritise volume over need, leaving them with little choice but to conduct routine check-ups instead of clearing the backlog of more time-consuming treatments. This creates an unsustainable situation, in which patients are unable to access the treatment they need while practitioners are in a race against time to maintain their financial viability. Although the Government have committed to reforming the system, we have seen no action and little appetite to do so.*

*Earlier this week, I met with the BDA's local dental practice committee and **Healthwatch Portsmouth**. They told me that the situation is untenable, and practices are increasingly concerned that they will not survive beyond the pandemic, which will further restrict patient access. With nowhere else to turn, one constituent contacted me to help arrange a dental appointment over Christmas. Having been unable to register for a NHS dentist, another constituent joined the 7.6% of English households that have attempted a do-it-yourself tooth extraction using pliers to relieve their pain.*

*While these stories are anecdotal, they increasingly reflect the reality of dental care in my community. Without urgent change, NHS dentistry in my constituency and across the country could be decimated, permanently damaging patient care for decades to come. I call on the Minister to take action to protect patients and dental practices in Portsmouth, and to hear my concerns today."*

Healthwatch England have published a report to summarise the feedback it has received from local Healthwatch (including Healthwatch Portsmouth) about the problems people have been facing in accessing NHS dental appointments during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Healthwatch England was mentioned in the news headlines bulletin on Radio 4's Today programme on 8th February, calling for an urgent review.

### **Healthwatch England briefing and report [here](#)**

Subsequent to the parliamentary debate in on 14<sup>th</sup> January the Government did not change its requirement for dentists to perform 40% of their pre-COVID dental activity. However, in February we received from NHS England an update about patient access to NHS dental appointments in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

### **[Update on NHS dental services Feb 21 in Hants and Isle of Wight](#)**

NHS England said they were aware of a high number of questions about access to dental services so this information described the current arrangements. NHSE will send out further information as the situation evolves. The second document is a spreadsheet providing an overview of the range of dental services in the area.

### **[Hants and Isle of Wight Dental System profiles Feb 21](#) - spreadsheet**

## **Maternity services**

From 22 February, pregnant women will be able to access their personalised care plans online and via app. This also means that newly pregnant women will no longer need to go through their GP and instead self-refer online.

Women are invited to download the My Maternity Notes app to access care plans, information leaflets, set up appointment reminders and send questions to their midwife for non-urgent support.

This has been an ongoing project and consultation process by local maternity services across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight (called Maternity Matters) that local Healthwatch and Wessex Voices worked on together to gather patient feedback to deliver better care for women and their families. Portsmouth Hospitals University Trust is the first maternity service in the county to go digital, with services across the local area to follow.

Wessex Voices did some work with local maternity services and HW in the HLOW area a year or so ago and contributed to a report produced by the maternity services across Southampton, Hampshire and Isle of Wight area (SHIP) called Maternity Matters. The digital switchover will have been part of that project.

## **Wheelchair service**

**The November meeting of the Wheelchair Forum gave information about how the contract had been running since AJM started to provide the service in April:** contract and reported that since AJM took the contract there have not been any service users that has gone over the 18 weeks waiting time but there are a significant number of service users that were transferred to AJM that have waited over 18 weeks. This will take a significant investment, as we will need to bring in extra clinicians to ensure that everyone is seen appropriately and we are hoping to hear that the CCG are going to give us the investment to the work that is required. Neil said

that sometimes it is possible to close and open a case while things are happening. Paul said that he reviews all the cases that are falling out of timescales. The second wave of Covid has not been as challenging as the first wave although there has been an impact on the special seating clinics as the company have suspended appointments again. Test and trace has been more active and so there have been occasions when staff have had to self isolate as a precautionary measure but we have been able to test staff quickly.

A service user guide is being developed which will be provided when someone receives their first wheelchair. AJM is working on improving the usability of their website and gathering patient stories to inform their service improvement planning.

## **Primary Care**

### **Hanway Road Surgery/Portsdown Group Practice - patient feedback on call system**

Board members may recall that in December I reported that there had been problems for patients trying to reach their new surgery by phone, having been transferred from being a patient at the Hanway Road practice. The incidences of patients being unable to reach the surgery receptionists continued. I heard in February during my intelligence gathering discussion with the local Care Quality Commission primary care liaison officer that the telephone system at the Portsdown Group Practice has had to be upgraded owing to the number of complaints that had been received from patients unable to reach the surgery. It was good to hear that from patient feedback improvement has been achieved.

### **Future closure of Guildhall Walk GP surgery- September 2021**

Healthwatch Portsmouth were alerted at the end of February that the contract for the provision of primary care at the Guildhall Walk Healthcare Centre will not be renewed when it comes to an end on Thursday 30 September 2021. As a result of this, the surgery at Guildhall Walk will close. This decision has been taken as the future of the building that currently houses the surgery is uncertain, and there are no other suitable locations in the area. A letter to patients was sent out at the end of February giving advance warning of the closure due for the autumn.

Healthwatch Portsmouth has asked about whether a 'capacity to cope' quality check has been undertaken on the current phone system at the surgery that is located closest to Guildhall Walk surgery, approximately a 4 minute walk away, that is likely to receive a large number of the 8,000+ patients who will be transferring to alternative GP surgeries in the city which state that they have capacity to accept new patients.

Here is the [briefing](#) note that Healthwatch Portsmouth received on the planned closure.

Healthwatch Portsmouth's concerns have been raised at the highest level in Portsmouth CCG and we await a response whether a call centre capacity check at likely 'transfer surgeries' has been undertaken to reassure patients about future access to the surgery.

## Easter Bank Holiday opening hours for primary care services:

NHS England has confirmed that there are not currently asking all of primary care (general practice, community pharmacy, dentistry and optometry) to routinely open for Easter Bank Holiday weekend as happened in 2020. However, they will continue to keep this decision under review, subject to the changing demands of the pandemic.

NHS commissioners have been advised that they should continue to work with their providers to ensure sufficient cover arrangements are in place to meet expected demands for primary care services over the Easter Bank Holiday weekend.

Local COVID vaccination services remain the exception, where necessary providing a 7-day service, including Bank Holidays.

## North Harbour Medical Group - moving to new premises

Healthwatch Portsmouth have received a copy of information sent to their patients:

North Harbour Medical Group wanted to make their patients aware of a potential move of North Harbour Medical Group from **Cosham Health Centre** to a new premises on the **Highclere site by Treetops in Cosham, PO6 3EP**. Planning permission hasn't gone in to build this new practice yet so a move wouldn't be for some time. Cosham Health Centre is an older building but the GP practice says that new premises would be more modern with good on-site parking facilities and improved access. The new location is a short distance from Cosham Health Centre and is well served by public transport.

The practice group have put a [notice on their website](#) about this potential move and are providing the same information to patients coming into the practice.

North Harbour Medical Group would stay in Cosham Health Centre until the new premises are ready so there would be no disruption to patient care. The same team would then relocate to the Highclere site so patients would continue to see the same staff they're familiar with. Good to read that the practice is giving early information about how it hopes to improve their patient experience.

## Secondary Care (and community based care)

### Carers

HWP Carers project : 'What Matters Most to unpaid carers'

<https://www.healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk/whatmattersmost/>

We launched on 16<sup>th</sup> November our flagship carers feedback gathering project to find out what has been the experience of Portsmouth residents, for whom many, due to COVID-19, had to become carers overnight, what they need and what needs to change. Headline results and an interim report were released at the end of December with the final report and recommendations (below) produced in early February. We had 108 responses from carers.

In the spring we will be working with Portsmouth City Council, Portsmouth Clinical Commissioning Group, the Carers Centre and other carers groups to bring about change for

carers in response to what they said they need and what needs to change. [What Matters Most To Unpaid Carers report Feb 2021](#)

[What Matters Most report: Healthwatch Portsmouth recommendations](#)

## Providers

### NHS re-organisation

**NHS White Paper (Feb 2021) ‘Integration and Innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all’ for a new Health and Social Care bill:**  
**Healthwatch England commentary: [can be read here](#)**

### ‘Gathering Feedback From Patients’ workshop - what really matters to patients

Further to Solent NHS Trust’s feedback gathering workshop in November to find out what really matters to patients, how to ask that question and when to ask it we opted to take part in the follow-up focus group to direct the ‘next steps for the Trust’ entitled ‘ Feedback opportunities should be provided at every step of the way not just at the end of the journey’ which tends to be our speciality area of work.

We were written to mid January to be informed that due to the very severe strain on NHS resources the next-steps workshops will need to be delayed until March (earliest) rather than run in January due to the pressures on NHS resources due to the pandemic.

### Parking charges at St Mary’s Hospital for patients and visitors

Due to the Government introducing restrictions for a 3<sup>rd</sup> national lockdown we were informed on 5<sup>th</sup> January that Solent NHS Trust had decided not to impose car park charges for patients and visitors for the foreseeable future. We wrote website and social media postings to advise the public of the change to what had previously been in force.

### Portsmouth Hospitals (University) Trust

Care Quality Commission Investigation into Serious Harm - February 2021

We have heard from chief Investigator involved at the Care Quality Commission of the ongoing investigation at Portsmouth Hospitals University Trust regarding a potential serious harm

incident. I have been assured that Healthwatch Portsmouth will receive information on the findings of the investigation when it is made available.

## **Director of Communications and Engagement recruitment process**

Healthwatch Portsmouth was invited to take part in the engagement section of the selection process to appoint the new Director of Communications and Engagement at PHUT which took place on 4<sup>th</sup> March.

## **Discharge of patients from QA Hospital who are likely to be homeless when leaving**

We have been alerted by Healthwatch England of reports of people being discharged from hospital (because the patient no longer clinically needs to be in hospital) to go back to the streets after having tested positive for COVID-19. While hospitals are facing significant pressure on beds the homeless hostels are not set up to take COVID positive residents.

HWP asked the Portsmouth City Council Homelessness Unit if they have heard of such problems. The Unit told us that NHS Solent and the CCG offer in-reach support at QA Hospital for anyone who is likely to be discharged from hospital to a homeless situation to prevent this from happening. Two Saints are due to provide this service which will also be linked to providers of Mental Health Services. The PCC Homelessness Unit started a similar service last year and were seeing good outcomes but the project had to pause due to the pandemic. We have just received confirmation that the service is re-starting now. In addition, the Unit is piloting some work with South Central Ambulance Service to support rough sleepers access this service to help reduce admissions to hospital.

## **QA Hospital North Car Park - Ward extension - building on half of North Car Park**

PHUT have approached PFCC to ask for their early views on the potential impact on patients and carers of restricted access to North Car Park on the QA Hospital site, at times, the entire car park will be unavailable, while construction work is underway to build a new ward for head injury and stroke patient rehabilitation services, which have been housed in the main hospital so far. PHUT estates office asked the Collaborative, of which HWP is a member, about preferences for the least disruptive impact of the construction work likely to take place between March and November 21. It is good to have received this invitation to provide input to the planning of the works prior to their starting and patients only discovering (potentially avoidable) problems from March.

## **Portsmouth Hospitals Trust Emergency Department (ED) Transformation Plan - update on progress**

Healthwatch Portsmouth met with Portsmouth Hospitals University Trust yesterday to discuss the development of the Building Better Emergency Care (BBEC) project, which is part of the Emergency Department (ED) Transformation project, inputting the patient family and carer perspective. We discussed the organising of a virtual Walk-Through of ED in the spring with the Head of Quality and Patient Experience Ward Accreditation and will be bringing news soon. The

intention is that the patient feedback gathered from this virtual walk-through will help with the next stage of the planning for the pathways and the through-hospital urgent care provision.

## NHS111 First: Early Mover site Portsmouth (University) Hospitals Trust

Further to the update I provided at the December Board meeting on the progress of the trial of '111 First' we have continued to be involved in very detailed discussions with the Chief Nurse about the way in which the service is being developed, working with the 111 call handlers and how the access arrangements for A&E is being communicated to the local population. We have been specific about our concerns for a potentially negative patient experience as the trial transitions into a full operating system and communications campaign is launched in the patient catchment area for PHUT.

Healthwatch England has issued a national survey to find out people's views of 111 and A&E services - not directly asking about people's experiences of the trialled '111 First'. The results of the national survey are due out next week. HWE will be publishing a blog on the results.

In early January the Care Quality Commission The Care Quality Commission (CQC) launched a national consultation on their new 5 year strategy. CQC say 'the draft strategy is the product of over 10,000 interactions with stakeholders and sets a bold ambition for CQC over the next five years. Below is a link to the online survey :



[CQC strategy consultation](#)

[CQC strategy consultation survey](#)

## Urgent and Emergency Care Standards in A&E: national consultation

NHS England had recommended replacing the current 4 hour wait target for accessing A&E with measures which included:

- 15 min target to initial assessment for all patients - which must be a meaningful clinical assessment
- A 1 hour target for treating the most sick patients - i.e. heart attacks, strokes, sepsis etc
- Separating out the average waiting times for admitted and non-admitted patients so people have a better idea of how long they may have to individually wait.
- A guarantee that waits of 12 hours or more won't be tolerated (these have been rising steadily in recent years).

These proposed national targets were included in the national consultation that closed at the end of February. Healthwatch Portsmouth submitted a response to the national consultation on the draft Clinical Standards including stating that we think it useful to have a bundle of measures rather than just one measure (the 4 hour wait) to give more information about the patient experience in Emergency Departments.

Where there was a text box to comment on the whole system we included the following:  
[HWP response to national consultation on Clinical Standards Review final.pdf](#)

## **Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust**

Healthwatch Portsmouth have received notice that the Second Stage Independent Review into the deaths of four people, who died in the care of the Trust in the period 2012-2015, is commencing. In February 2020, the Independent Review led by Nigel Pascoe QC published [their Report](#).

The Report recommended there should be a Second Stage Review that looks at what progress the Trust has made against four key themes and this is now scheduled to take place in March-April 2021. The Independent Review Panel and NHSI has now issued details of [their process](#). ***The Review Panel are inviting views from service users.***

When the Independent Review Panel complete their Report it will be published and the Trust will write to stakeholders (such as Healthwatch Portsmouth) to ensure we are made aware.

The review is independently commissioned by NHS Improvement and the Trust is a respondent to the review, but if there is anything that is unclear about the process the Trust is able to try to clarify for enquirers. If so, pl contact the Trust Chief Executive, Ron Shields c/o [communications@southernhealth.nhs.uk](mailto:communications@southernhealth.nhs.uk)

## **Portsmouth City Council**

Portsmouth City Council has been responding to the Coronavirus outbreak with a dedicated team to support the city's needs, spearheaded by the Local Resilience Forum. Here is link to the information page that is regularly updated: <https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/ext/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19> Details of which services have been suspended and those that continue appear here.

## **Portsmouth Health and Care Update:**

In late November 2020

The Governing Board of Portsmouth CCG was able to seek clarity on the outstanding recommendations made by NHS England and has now approved them. This will see NHS Portsmouth CCG sharing a managerial Accountable Officer role with other CCGs across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, with this same individual also fulfilling the role of the Chief Officer of the Integrated Care System for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. NHS England confirmed that Integrated Care Systems occupying a central role is the direction of travel. They remain supportive of the Health and Care Portsmouth model and the partnership working within this.

Portsmouth CCG will now work with NHS England on the changes required to its constitution and the appointment process to amend its Accountable Officer arrangements. The CCG continues to work with Health and Care Portsmouth's partner Portsmouth City Council in the further development of integrated commissioning arrangements as well as more widely with Portsmouth CCG's colleagues across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight regarding collaborative working arrangements.

In late December Healthwatch Portsmouth received updates on the structural changes being made at strategic level and the appointment of key leadership team members

[ICS and CCG Exec Team chart](#)

[HIOW ICS Letter for Portsmouth Healthwatch 18.12.20](#)

### **Portsmouth City Council Health and Wellbeing Board meeting 3.2.21**

Here is a link to the (publicly available) reports pack for the meeting:

[Health and Wellbeing Board meeting 3.2.21 reports pack](#)

Of particular interest to Healthwatch Portsmouth was Agenda Item 5: Next Steps to Integrated Care Systems which included Portsmouth CCG's response to NHS England (Agenda Item 5, pages 19 -30).

### **Visiting care homes : new guidance from Government 8<sup>th</sup> March**

New guidance to support safe care home visits during lockdown easing has been issued. Healthwatch Portsmouth has developed a [briefing doc](#) to support families, friends and carers to be able to use the guidance and improve the quality of life for their loved one in the home and for themselves. A [draft letter](#) for families, friends or carers to use in preparation for organising a visit to the care home has been prepared to help aid this process.

### **Hampshire and Isle of Wight Sustainability and Transformation Partnership - transitioning to Integrated Care System**

As local systems gear up to transitioning from Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships (STPs), ours covers Hampshire and the Isle of Wight area, to Integrated Care Systems, which again will cover the same footprint the Government has issued a discussion document. [Integrating Care - Next steps for integrated care systems](#) sets out the next steps to building strong and effective integrated care systems. The consultation ran until 8<sup>th</sup> January. HWP responded to the consultation. HIOW local Healthwatches organised to have a meeting with the HIOW STP/ICS Engagement team to find out how we can best organise to have a co-ordinated approach to patient and public engagement in the ICS framework:

An agreement is being drawn up by local Health in the Hampshire and Isle of Wight area to agree and present to the ICS with regard to future engagement. It will describe the type of

relationship that local Healthwatch should enjoy with the ICS. (Healthwatch Portsmouth Board members were asked for their thoughts on this in February and these have fed into the discussion to finalise the document for presenting to the ICS.)

In early March NHSE released their plans for the new approach to the delivery of healthcare for the people of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, which is the local detail of the broader ranging NHS 10 Year Plan. Here is the [HIOW Long Term Plan](#) any comments are welcome from the Board.

**Ends**

11<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Siobhain McCurrach, Healthwatch Portsmouth Manager.

[www.healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk)