

The Work of Healthwatch Cambridgeshire

To: Adults and Health Committee

Meeting Date: 24 June 2021

From: Chief Executive Officer, Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Electoral division(s): Countywide.

Key decision: No

Outcome: The Committee is asked to consider the work of the local Healthwatch and receive intelligence collated from community feedback.

Recommendation: The Adults and Health Committee are recommended to:

Note the report.

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1. Background

- 1.1 Local Healthwatch were established as part of the Health and Social Care Act 2012. They are the independent and statutory patient and public voice organisation whose functions are set out in legislation¹. This includes gathering views of local people about health and care services and making decision makers aware of such views. Funding for Healthwatch is via several grant streams received by local authorities from central government.
- 1.2 Healthwatch Cambridgeshire was established in May 2013 as an independent community interest company. In 2017 Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Healthwatch Peterborough combined to form one single community interest company delivering separate but overlapping Healthwatch functions. Our local Healthwatch has clearly set out its vision and strategy and bases all its work on valuing and listening to the views of all local communities, with a focus on those people who are not usually heard.

2. Main Issues

- 2.1 The Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough annual report for 2020/21 will be published by 30th June 2021, as required by law. The annual report will describe the activities of Healthwatch during the past year. Key highlights are described in the following paragraphs.
- 2.2 During 2020/21 all engagement has been shifted online, due to the pandemic. Views of local people are collected through a variety of ways including:
 - Three Healthwatch health and care forums in Cambridgeshire
 - Information service via telephone and email
 - Specific surveys as part of project work
 - Workshops and focus groups
 - Adult social care partnership boards
 - Partnership working.
- 2.3 The number of people contacting Healthwatch during the pandemic has increased. As has the volume of feedback received. Project work is initiated through an internal escalation process. Three project reports were published during 2020/21, each has a list of recommendations and we are tracking the impact that these have.
 - Your care during Covid²

¹ [Our history and functions | Healthwatch](#)

² [Report shines light on Covid health and care struggles | Healthwatch Cambridgeshire](#)

- Giving GP websites a check up³
- Leaving hospital during Covid⁴.

- 2.4 There are common themes across the findings of these reports. People frequently tell stories of how difficult it is to find their way around services, about being digitally excluded and that key points, such as leaving hospital, can be very problematic for some. The recommendations in the reports have been well received and some changes already implemented.
- 2.4 During the year the Healthwatch Information Service and web pages have kept local people up to date with the very significant changes as they have happened, including services closing and reopening and how to get help from community hubs. Keeping websites and social media up to date with vaccination advice has been a priority. Healthwatch has also helped connect communities who may be more hesitant, as well as resolving issues for a few people who have missed their vaccination due to being who are housebound.
- 2.5 By listening to local people Healthwatch can understand better about people's worries and fears. Getting registered with a GP has been difficult for some, so information to support people with that process has been disseminated.
- 2.6 The top topics that people have contacted Healthwatch about in the past year have been:
- Ongoing issues finding an NHS dentist in all areas of Cambridgeshire.
 - GP services – including feedback on the move to remote appointments, long waits to be 'seen' and the quality of care.
 - Hospital care – including experiences of inpatient care and outpatient appointments – including remote appointments.
 - Community services – such as Covid-19 support and vaccination, and changes in appointments for services like physiotherapy.
 - Diagnostic services – including questions about Covid-19 testing
 - Urgent and emergency care services – including feedback on Minor Injuries Units, A&Es, ambulance services, NHS 111 and out of hours' GP care.
- 2.7 Feedback to Healthwatch on many of these topics continues. It is clear that there is increasing demand for services, help and support across the whole health and social care system. New ways of working are being introduced, through the evolving Integrated Care System primarily. Healthwatch is encouraged to have been involved from the outset and advice on patient and public engagement is frequently sought.
- 2.8 Our Healthwatch has taken up a number of opportunities to promote our work nationally. By

³ [Making GP websites clearer for patients | Healthwatch Cambridgeshire](#)

⁴ <https://www.healthwatchcambridgeshire.co.uk/report/2020-12-15/leaving-hospital-during-covid-19>

helping Healthwatch England design their online engagement training package, completing an NHS England project to develop a methodology for understanding experiences and contributing to the national consultation on new A&E standards.⁵

3. Alignment with corporate priorities

3.1 Communities at the heart of everything we do

The Healthwatch statutory function is to connect and listen to communities, and work with our local authority and health partners to increase awareness, thereby encouraging decisions to be made based on what matters to local people.

5. Source documents guidance

5.1 Source documents

None of the information used to compile this report are County Council documents. References have been included as footnotes.

⁵ [Local people have their say in urgent care standards consultation | Healthwatch Cambridgeshire](#)