



news

Talking about mental health

Islington has the highest rates of serious mental illness in London. More common problems such as depression and anxiety are also widespread. Our membership asked Healthwatch to make mental health services a priority area of work.

We chose to look at services for young adults. 18 to 32 year olds don't use mental health services as much as the rest of the community. We wanted to find out why that was. We provided training to 20 young adults, equipping them to interview their peers about their experiences of mental health.

We worked with a range of specialist partners to identify young people to interview. That was because we wanted to hear from vulnerable groups; people who were homeless, leaving care, socially isolated or members of the LGBT (Lesbian,

Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) community. We also targeted members of the Asian, Black African and Black African Caribbean communities.

50 interviews took place. We asked everyone who took part to describe the kind of mental health support services that would be most useful to them and to other people of their own age. We also sought the views of professionals working to support these young people.

We sent an early draft of the report to our local commissioners of public health and mental health services, and have worked with them to draw up some practical recommendations for making mental health support easier for young adults to access. The final version of our report is available on the Healthwatch Islington website.

Spotlight on Whittington Health

I didn't have to wait long to be seen and my appointment went really smoothly. I was given clear instructions and an appointment in two weeks. I've never been to the Whittington before and I'm very impressed! Staff are friendly, it seems very clean and there's good signposting.

Feedback about the eye clinic at the Whittington



The Care Quality Commission (CQC) monitors and inspects all health and social care services in England. In December a team of inspectors will be coming to Whittington Health. Whittington Health means not just the hospital itself, but also a wide range of services provided out in the community - physiotherapy, district nursing, health visiting and specialist footcare for example.

Ahead of the inspection, the CQC asked us to share all the comments we have heard about Whittington Health over the last 12 months. We run a regular stall at the hospital where we gather views from patients and visitors alike. Out at community events (pictured overleaf), people also have a lot to say about their local hospital. We've passed all the feedback on.

A lot of people have had very good things to say, others have been more critical. That's the nature of public opinion. Our aim, as always, is to ensure that the views of local service users are taken into account. If you have a view you would like to share on services you've received from the Whittington let us know.

You can read the full report we sent to the CQC in the News section of the Healthwatch Islington website, or give us a call on 020 7832 5814 and ask us to send you a copy.

Communication Breakdown

Communication, or the lack of it, came up as the main issue in the comments we received. This complaint tended not to be levelled at individual members of staff (indeed many were praised) but rather at Whittington Health as a whole. People felt that the hospital did not always communicate effectively with them. This problem (which many large organisations have to grapple with) was felt to be compounded by poor communication between GPs and hospitals in general.

There were, for example, a number of instances reported of referrals not being received, causing delays in treatment (although other commenters described a much more positive experience).

What we did see was evidence that communication difficulties have the biggest impact on the most vulnerable groups in the community. That's because the frail elderly, or those that require interpreting support, for example, are less able to be proactive in dealing with their own treatment.

Last year we made a number of recommendations to local hospitals around improving the experience of Deaf service users specifically; both in terms of written communication, and during appointments. The other hospitals have made improvements to this particular aspect of their service, based on the suggestions we made. It would be great to see the Whittington do likewise.

I've contacted the hospital and been told I am 12th in the queue a few times. I don't understand why you have to go through this to speak to someone. It seems as though people creating these systems don't know what it's like to use them. I think it would be better if they could use a text system!

Feedback about telecomms at Whittington Health



An elderly patient who needed support to make herself understood in English had an appointment at the Whittington (the ophthalmology department) in April 2015. A local voluntary organisation had called the hospital before the appointment and been assured that an interpreter would be provided. But when she arrived for her appointment there was no interpreter, and this was the second time this had happened to her.

Feedback passed on to Healthwatch Islington's signposting team.

They have built a real rapport with the family. The whole paediatric team have been great. Little things like being given a £4 food voucher for my daughter when she comes for an appointment make a huge difference. I don't think this happens in other boroughs.

Feedback about paediatric unit, Whittington Hospital

'Very pleased with x-ray service today. I was referred by my GP this morning and had an x-ray at Whittington Hospital at midday. No waiting time seen straight away.'

Feedback given at Healthwatch Islington's stall at the hospital.



A geriatric specialist to help someone to communicate would be useful when they can't express themselves.

Feedback on geriatric services at the Whittington, from our stall in Chapel Market in August.

Events coming up

Annual meeting

Healthwatch Islington's annual meeting takes place on Tuesday October 20 from 4 to 7pm. This year the meeting is being held at London Metropolitan University, in the large Tower Building (right) on Holloway Road (166-220 Holloway Road, N7 8DB). We're in room TM-183 but don't worry, Healthwatch staff and volunteers will be on hand to guide.

At the meeting we'll explore how voluntary sector organisations can influence how health and social care services are planned locally. We'll see some examples of projects going on currently. We'll also hear from guest speakers, and there will be a Question and Answer session with statutory bodies on the theme of integrated care. Refreshments will be served. Please let us know if you are coming. All are welcome.

RSVP to info@healthwatchislington.co.uk or call 020 7832 5814.

Steering group meetings

The next meeting of the steering group is on 8 December from 6 till 8pm at the Healthwatch Islington offices at 200a Pentonville Road, London N1 9JP

Following that, the steering group meets again on 23 February 2016, again from 6 till 8pm. These meetings are open to the public. Please let us know if you intend to come along.

Training Courses

Healthwatch Islington is offering two free training courses to its members and partners which will be made available to the wider voluntary sector for a small charge. The courses are on equality and diversity, and community engagement. The dates haven't been finalised but we anticipate delivering the courses before Christmas. For more details contact emma@healthwatchislington.co.uk or call 020 7832 5814.



Community members needed

Are you interested in improving NHS health services in the borough? Islington Clinical Commissioning Group has opportunities for local residents to become involved in some of their decision making groups. You do not need specialist knowledge. If you're interested in being involved please email islccg.engagement@nhs.net for more information.

Our contact details

You can visit our website to give feedback on any health and social care services you use, and get information about other services that are available. If computers aren't for you, you can call us, or write a letter. You won't need a stamp.

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