



Healthwatch Kent - January 2019

Experiences of patients at the community mental health clinic in Arndale House, Dartford



Foreword

We hear from people all over Kent about community mental health services. Although some of it is positive, the majority are negative stories from people and their Carers.

We wanted to understand more about the issues people are facing when using the community mental health service.

At the same time the Care Quality Commission inspected the service and identified areas that needed to improve. Following that inspection, we have been working with the organisations which commission and provide the community mental health service to gather feedback from the people who use the service.

We visited six clinics across Kent and Medway and have spoken to 86 people about their experience.

We had hoped to speak to more people and Kent & Medway NHS & Social Care Partnership who run these clinics had promised to support our visits and ensure staff were aware that we were coming and that a private room would be available for us to speak with people. Unfortunately, this didn't happen at over half of our visits which meant that we haven't spoken to as many people as we had planned. We have shared our frustrations along with our findings.

All of the feedback we have heard will be shared with the provider and commissioners of the community mental health service. We will also be giving our feedback to the Care Quality Commission.

If you would like more information, or would like to get involved then do please contact us on info@healthwatchkent.co.uk or call anytime on **0808 801 0102**

Steve Inett

Chief Executive, Healthwatch Kent



What were we trying to achieve

We wanted to talk to people who were actively using community mental health services and hear from them about their recent experiences.

How did we go about it?

Our trained volunteers visited Arndale House, Dartford on 31st October 2018

The clinic had been informed of our visit and had displayed information encouraging people to share their stories with us. The clinic provided a room for us to talk privately with people.

Staff were very welcoming and pleased to answer any questions from our volunteers. The senior person on duty spent time giving background information and welcomed feedback at the end of our visit.

We spoke to **nine patients** including one man accompanied by a support worker, who spoke on his behalf. There were no carers or family members available to talk to us during our visit.





What did we find? What did we hear?

In Summary

The majority of people we spoke to found it takes a long time for the telephone to be answered and when a message was left no one contacted them.

People were positive about the mental health crisis team reporting that the staff were helpful and supportive.

All felt involved in their care, but one person raised concern about the lack of communication between their support worker and their care manager.

One person had been waiting for over thirty minutes to receive their medication, which they said was longer than usual.



What have we recommended?

- Ensure that medication is available when requested so that people don't have to revisit the clinic or go without.
- Patient letters should be reworded to ensure they are jargon free and easy to understand. Healthwatch would be happy to help. Patients should also be involved in this process.
- Ensure that all phone messages left by patients are acted upon as soon as possible. Staff acknowledged that there were issues with the phone system, which clearly needs improving.

Our findings in detail

The staff were friendly and courteous to patients arriving for their appointments, addressing them by their first name. The clinic was warm, welcoming and inclusive.

The reception area was clean and tidy with fresh drinking water available.

Meeting rooms were available for patients to talk to their worker just off the reception area. There was a comprehensive display of leaflets in the reception area.

Most people we spoke to were relatively happy with the service although there were some negative comments about the telephone system.



What did we find? What did we hear?

Telephone system & Appointments

“I don’t phone myself, staff where I live do it for me”

“Sometimes there is a queue in the morning and afternoon, you have to wait ages”

“I cannot use a telephone”

“You have to wait a long time”

“The last time I waited over half an hour and that was in an emergency”

“You wait ten to fifteen minutes at least”

“I don’t leave a message”



What did we find? What did we hear? Continued

Cancellations

- “Usually cover is arranged so the appointment is not cancelled”
- “My initial appointment was cancelled at very short notice”
- “None cancelled yet, thankfully”
- “I was told that the worker was ill and couldn’t make another appointment for several weeks. I was offered an appointment at home with two other workers, they were also very nice”

Medication

- “I am here today to pick up my prescription. I was put on new tablets two weeks ago to help with shakes. I am much better but ran out of tablets yesterday. I phoned but no one phoned back, so came up today. I have been waiting for over half an hour, I don’t usually wait this long”



What did we find? What did we hear? Continued

Support and information

- “I was advised to go to a health class for my COPD”
- “Voluntary work was sourced for me, walking with dogs but I don’t do it now”
- “What is the point of telling them all about my issues, if they tell me to contact someone else?”
- “I have been given a contact sheet with crisis numbers on”
- “It was the other way around, I went to MIND and they referred me here”

Cancelled Appointments

- “I haven’t missed an appointment”
- “So far this has not happened”
- “My support worker deals with this for me”





What did we find? What did we hear? Continued

Involvement



- “It has been good to come here and talk over problems. She is very helpful. Other workers are helpful too, I have written a diary of how I feel”.
- “I am relatively new here”
- “If my medication is changed, they arrange for a hospital stay to monitor impact”



What did we find? What did we hear? Continued

Crisis support

- The four patients that had used the crisis team found them helpful and supportive
- Others that we spoke to were unclear who to contact when in a crisis, with most saying they would contact the clinic

Has the service improved over the last six months?

- Most people felt it had remained the same
- Two thought it had improved





Acknowledgement

Healthwatch Kent would like to thank patients, family and friends and our volunteers for taking the time to contribute to this piece of work.

Disclaimer

Please note this report relates to the findings on the day stated at the beginning of this report. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all patients, family and friends, only an account of what was contributed and observed during our visit on that day.



Healthwatch Kent

Healthwatch Kent is the independent voice for local people in Kent.

We gather and represent people's views about any health and social care service in Kent.

Our role is to understand what matters most to people and to use that information to influence providers and commissioners to change the way services are designed and developed.

Our **FREE** Information and Signposting service can help you navigate Kent's complicated health and social care system to ensure you can find and access the services that are available for you. Call us on 0808 801 0102 or email info@healthwatchkent.co.uk



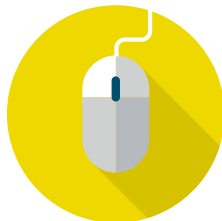
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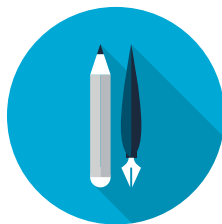
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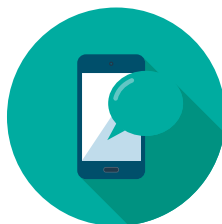
By Post:

Write to us or fill in and send a Speak out form. **Freepost RTLG-UBZB-JUZA**
Healthwatch Kent, Seabrooke House,
Church Rd, Ashford TN23 1RD



Face to Face:

Call 0808 801 01 02 to arrange a visit



By Text: Text us on **07525 861 639**.

By texting 'NEED BSL', Healthwatch's British Sign Language interpreter will make contact and arrange a time to meet face to face.