

Healthwatch Kent - October 2019

Experiences of people using community mental health services at **Laurel House, Canterbury**



Foreword

In October 2018, our volunteers visited Laurel House in Canterbury to talk to people who were using the community mental health services. We wanted to hear their feedback about the service and understand what, in their view, could be improved. In January 2019 we published a report which detailed everything we heard as well as making a number of recommendations.

During the same time frame, we also visited five other community mental health clinics in Kent talking to a total of 89 people about their experiences. We shared all our recommendations with the Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership (KMPT) and encouraged them to make the necessary improvements.

We returned to Laurel House this year on two occasions, one in August and one in September. We wanted to talk to the patients who were currently using the service to hear their experiences and to see whether the service had improved.

This report details our findings from these new visits. Once again, we will be sharing what we heard with the Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership (KMPT) as well as the organisations that commission them. We will also be sharing our findings with the Care Quality Commission.

If you have a story to tell, get in touch and share it with us.

Robbie Gotham

Healthwatch Kent



What were we trying to achieve?

We wanted to talk to people who were currently using community mental health services at Laurel House. Through their feedback we wanted to find out whether the service had improved since our previous visit in 2018 and to see whether our recommendations had been put in place.

In January 2019, we made the following recommendations to Laurel House:

- Ensure patients are issued with new appointments in a timely manner
- Talk to staff about signposting patients to alternative health services
- Organise follow up calls to patients who have recently been discharged from hospital
- Review the crisis service to make sure that patients can access the service when they need it





How did we go about it?

Our trained Healthwatch staff and volunteers visited Laurel House twice, once during August 2019 and the other in September 2019.

We spoke to:

19 patients



2 carers



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.

During our visits, we spoke to patients using the service and listened to their thoughts and experiences.



What did we find? What did we hear?

- **23% of patients** said that the **service had shown improvement**
- **Over half the people (52%)** we spoke to said that they **did not receive a call back** when they left a message with the clinic
- If an appointment was missed, **only 50% of the patients were called to check that they were ok**
- **EVERYONE** we spoke to were **offered an alternative appointment time if their original one had to be cancelled** by the clinic
- **Over three quarters of the people (76%)** we spoke to had been **offered information on other agencies** that might be of use
- **21% of patients** had **not been offered support** by staff to access health services and wanted it.
- **41% of patients** said that they found it **difficult to get through to someone on the telephone**
- **94% of the people** we spoke to **knew who to contact** if they think they are in crisis



How does it compare to last year?

Last year we heard that when appointments were cancelled by the Trust, only 50% were given a new appointment. **We said that all patients must be issued a new appointment in a timely manner.**

This year we found that **EVERYONE** who had an appointment cancelled was offered a new one.

We found that 75% of patients told us that staff offered them information on other agencies. **We said that staff should be signposting ALL patients to alternative health services.**

This year we found that **76% of patients were given information on other agencies** that may be able to help them.

Last year 66% of patients knew who to contact if they felt they were in crisis. **We said that the crisis service should be reviewed so that patients can access the service when they need it.**

This year we found that **94%** of people knew who to contact if they thought that they were in crisis, and **71%** of people had used the service.



Care Plans

During our visits we heard a lot of comments about care plans. Some patients told us that they never had care plans, or that they weren't eligible for one or that they had to be in the service for a year or more to get one. Others told us that they DID have a care plan with some people suggesting it was out of date.

We went back to KMPT to get some clarification. They told us that all patients should get a care plan after their initial assessment. This plan may come in the form of a letter which patients may not always recognise as their plan. There is no set time for the care plan to be updated, as every patient is treated individually, and it will be dependent on what is agreed at their review. Reviews should be happening regularly but again the frequency can be dependent on each individual.



Our new recommendations

The stories that people shared with us describe a clinic that struggles with communication. We have made some updated recommendations in the following areas:

- The clinic must have clearer signage to direct people to the disabled access
- If a patient has to leave an answerphone message, staff should respond to them in a reasonable amount of time (48 hours)
- If a patient misses an appointment, staff must contact the patient to check their wellbeing within 24 hours, and make arrangement for a new appointment to be set
- All patients should be involved in their care and must have an up to date care plan with changes to medication or their treatment plan documented.
- Staff must ensure patients and carers understand what documentation will be used to keep them updated about their care.
- Staff should make sure they offer support to patients to access other health services
- Make sure all patients are offered information about other agencies that may be of help to them.

Our findings in detail

- The staff were friendly and courteous to patients arriving for their appointments.
- The reception area was clean and tidy, with fresh drinking water. The site was accessible for visitors with a disability and there are clear fire evacuation routes displayed. There were information boards in the waiting area with a wide variety of leaflets.
- The average amount of time that people had been with the service was 8.5 years and the longest that someone had been with the service was 20 years.



Our findings in detail

Have you noticed a change or improvement in the service?

10 people felt that the service was the same, **4 people** felt that it had improved and **3 people** said that it had gotten worse.

- “I feel like I’ve got more of a personal service, designed for me”
- “More consistent new care coordinator for the past year”
- “Having to wait longer for appointments and to see people, but just recently”
- “Less staff, appointment making is difficult”

Telephone Systems & Appointments

41% of people said that **THEY WERE** able to get through on the phone, the same number told us that they **COULDN’T** get through, and the rest said that they had never bothered trying to call.

- “They don’t pick up. I withhold my number and then they pick up”
- “Very difficult to get through”
- “A bit hit and miss in terms of getting through and speaking to someone”
- “Sometimes I can get through and sometimes not”

If people had to leave a message, **52%** said that they never had a call back.

- “It’s 50/50 if they call you back”
- “It can take a couple of weeks to be called back”
- “Don’t usually call back”
- “Only sometimes”

5 people told us that they hadn’t missed an appointment. Of the people who **HAD** missed an appointment, only **50%** of them told us that a member of staff contacted them to check that they were ok.



Our findings in detail

Cancellations

When we asked if the Trust has to cancel an appointment, do they tell you why? **9 people** told us that they had never had an appointment cancelled.

5 people did have an appointment cancelled and they were told the reason why, whilst **3** didn't get an explanation.

Of the people who did have an appointment cancelled, **all of them** were offered an alternative date.

About the care

88% of patients said that they felt involved in their care, however only **41%** had a copy of their care plan.

- "I feel happy and confident with my care"
- "I feel involved. I could discuss things if I wanted to"

We also heard:

- "The service is moving. I don't know where. I haven't been told anything"
- "Never felt involved. Never spoken to about what's going on"



Our findings in detail

Crisis service

94% of patients know who to contact if they felt they were in crisis, with **71%** having called the crisis team before.

- “Good, I was put into hospital quickly”
- “They were good, helpful, came out when I needed them”

However we were also told:

- “Not a good response, I didn’t feel listened to”
- “Found them alright”





Our findings in detail

Support & Information

We asked patients if staff had offered them information on any other agencies that they might find useful; **24% of people** told us that they were not offered any information, however the rest told us that they were given information about useful services, such as:

- “Take Off, a mental health charity”
- “Social services”
- “The early intervention team in Folkestone”
- “Kent enablement and recovery service”
- “Bereavement counselling”

We asked if patients had been offered support by staff to access other health services, and **59%** of patients **HAD BEEN OFFERED SUPPORT**. Of the **7 people** who were not offered support, **4** of them actually wanted to be offered support.

Carers

We spoke to **2 carers** during our visits, who told us that the Trust was doing “quite well” at communicating with them about the patient.

One carer “had never been asked” to help draft the care plan.

The other carer told us that they had been involved in drafting the care plan but that “they need better communication around times & dates of appointments”





Acknowledgement

Healthwatch Kent would like to thank patients, family, friends, carers 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 days stated at the beginning of this report. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all patients, family, friends and carers, only an account of what was contributed and observed during our visit on those days noted.



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



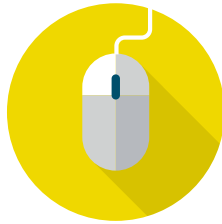
By Telephone:

Healthwatch Kent
Freephone 0808 801 01 02



By Email:

Info@healthwatchkent.co.uk



Online:

www.healthwatchkent.co.uk



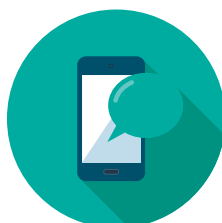
By Post:

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.