



**Healthwatch Kent** - December 2018

Experiences of patients at the community mental health clinic in Albion Place, Maidstone



# 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 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](mailto: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 Albion Place Medical Practice in Maidstone on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2018.**

**We spoke to 11 patients and two carers** who were accompanying their relative.

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.





# What did we find? What did we hear?

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## In Summary

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- We heard that the telephone system can be complicated for people. People found it difficult to understand especially when they are not well.
- People told us it is often hard to get through to the clinic on the phone, but if they leave a message, they mostly get a call back.
- People told us that on occasion their appointment was cancelled at the last minute. Some people only found out about the cancellation when they arrived for their appointment. People found this frustrating especially when they couldn't rebook for several weeks.
- Medication was not always available at the clinic which meant people had to return to collect it.
- Most people we spoke to felt involved in their care, but not all had a care plan, or had been involved in drafting it.
- All but one of the people that we spoke to had used the mental health crisis service. We heard both positive and negative stories about the mental health crisis service.



# What have we recommended?

- The telephone system needs to be simplified to support patients better
- Work with patients and carers to review the options given on the telephone booking system
- Better communication about cancelled appointments needs to be implemented
- Ensure medication is available when needed to prevent delays and return visits
- All patients should have an accurate and up to date care plan
- The patient and their family must be involved in developing a care plan
- Ensure everyone is offered information and support



## 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 evacuation fire routes displayed. There were information boards in the waiting area with a wide variety of leaflets.

Most people we spoke to had been with the service for between five and twenty-five years. The newer patients seemed more satisfied with the service than the longer-term ones.



# Findings in more detail.

## Telephone system & Appointments

- We heard that the telephone system can be complicated for people. People found it difficult to understand especially when they are not well.
- “You can’t get through to reception and they don’t call back”
- “It’s easy to get hold of people and they make me feel welcome”
- “This is my first time and have already been waiting for 45 minutes”
- “It is impossible to get through on the phone. The options you are offered do not fit the circumstances of someone who has a mental health illness. I call for my relative, and even I find it hard to navigate the phone system. Someone in a crisis would not be able to work through the telephone system”
- “It has got worse, I have been waiting for nine months for an appointment, and then it was cancelled. I had to wait a further four months for this appointment today.”
- “I call for my relative, so goodness knows how someone in a crisis would find the system”
- “Not always, when you call you have so many options, i.e. press 1, 2, 3, 4 etc, it is just easier to come to the clinic than try and call.
- “They are always busy”
- “You get through eventually, but not what you need when you are in crisis”
- 7 people knew that the appointment letters had recently been changed to make them easier to understand.
- “I am lucky, I am better than I was but one of the reception staff takes no notice of me. The one that is on today is lovely”
- “I am quite pleased with the service”

**23%**

of people felt they couldn't get through to the clinic on the telephone

**7 people**

knew that the appointment letters had recently been changed to make them easier to understand



# Findings in more detail.

## Cancellations

- “They cancelled my wife’s appointment, it should have been re-arranged but we did not hear for three months”
- 30% (5 people) hadn’t been told the reason why their appointment had been cancelled
- “Sometimes they tell me when I arrive for my appointment”
- “There was no explanation, it was just cancelled”
- “I had to keep calling to get another appointment”
- Three people weren’t offered an alternative when their appointment had been cancelled

## Medication

- “My drugs are never issued on time”

## Support and information

- 50% felt that they had been given information about places to go for support, but 50% disagreed
- “I’ve been told about music therapy”
- “My Dad found out about Cognitive Behavioural Therapy”





# Findings in more detail.

## Support between appointments

- 30% (4 people) had been contacted by staff to check they were ok when they didn't turn up for their appointment
- Another four people said they hadn't been called when they had not been able to attend an appointment

## Involvement

- 46% (6 people) did feel that they had been involved in their care
- 2 people didn't feel they had been involved
- "I have only seen one psychiatrist in three years, and they said they did not know what to do with me."
- Five patients said that they had a copy of their care plan and two did not.
- "I had a Care Plan in January, but it had lots of mistakes in it. For example, it said I had been coming for 3 months, but actually I've been coming here for 3 years"
- "I used to have one, but not now"
- "It's useless"
- One of the Carers we spoke to had been involved in the Care Plan, the other had not







# Findings in more detail.

## Crisis support

- Everyone we spoke to, knew who to contact in a crisis
- All but one person we spoke to had used the crisis service
- “I was told that the office was closed, there was nothing to support me at the time”
- “They have always been there for me”
- “Only out of hours, if you have a crisis between 8am and 5pm. Monday to Friday there is no help, only out of hours”
- “They came out to me”
- “I was taken to A&E by the police, then I saw the crisis team”
- “It was a nightmare”
- “They’re ok, they tell you to do some colouring or read a book”
- “They only come out if I have a blade, which is seen as life threatening, then they come the next day”

## Has the service improved over the last six months?

- **Most people** felt it had remained the same
- **2 people** felt it had improved



# Acknowledgement

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**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](mailto:info@healthwatchkent.co.uk)



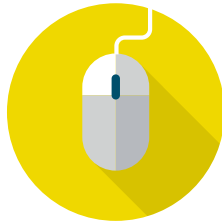
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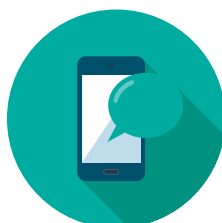


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**By Text:** Text us on **07525 861 639**.

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