

Improving wheelchair services in Kent

A Healthwatch Kent Impact Report : November 2019



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The story so far

People all over Kent started sharing negative stories about the wheelchair service with us. The Kent Physical Disability Forum also came to us with a host of stories.

We heard from people being discharged from hospital without no wheelchairs, people waiting months for a wheelchair and serious issues when wheelchairs needed repairing.

We took action. We shared your stories with the provider of the service, Millbrook Healthcare, the commissioner before escalating our concerns to the Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

A snapshot of the stories we heard

I needed a wheelchair, but nothing was available, so I was discharged in a 'normal' chair.

The only way my wife can get to her appointments is on a stretcher as we are still waiting for her wheelchair to be repaired

My powered wheelchair was taken away to be fixed. It's been weeks, and in the meantime, I am stuck.

I waited 330 days since I was referred by my MS nurse for the wheelchair service to assess me. I then had to wait another 69 days for the actual wheelchair.

My patient has waited over a year for the wheelchair she needs. She's a child and it has still not been provided

We've been working to make your voice heard

We took your feedback to the decision makers

Listening to you

We worked with the Kent Physical Disability Forum to gather feedback from people who were using the wheelchair service all over Kent.

We wanted to hear as many stories as possible about people's experiences.

Taking your voice to decision makers

The Service provider

The wheelchair service in Kent had recently been taken over by Millbrook Healthcare.

We facilitated a meeting between Millbrook, the Kent Physical Disability Forum, wheelchair user groups and the Medway Physical Disability Forum along with the commissioners of the service, Thanet Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).

At this meeting we shared the feedback we had heard and discussed our collective concerns.

The Kent Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee (HOSC)

We escalated our concerns about the wheelchair service to HOSC which is a Committee made up of Kent County Councillors, whose role it is to scrutinise health services in Kent. This is the highest form of scrutiny within the Kent health system.

On 20 July 2018, representatives from Healthwatch Kent and the Kent Physical Disability Forum addressed the Committee about our concerns and the feedback we had heard from patients and professionals.

In response, Members expressed concerns about poor patient experience. They also raised concerns about the procurement of the contract and subsequent contract performance management by NHS Thanet CCG. They asked for immediate action to improve the service for Kent residents.

What happened?

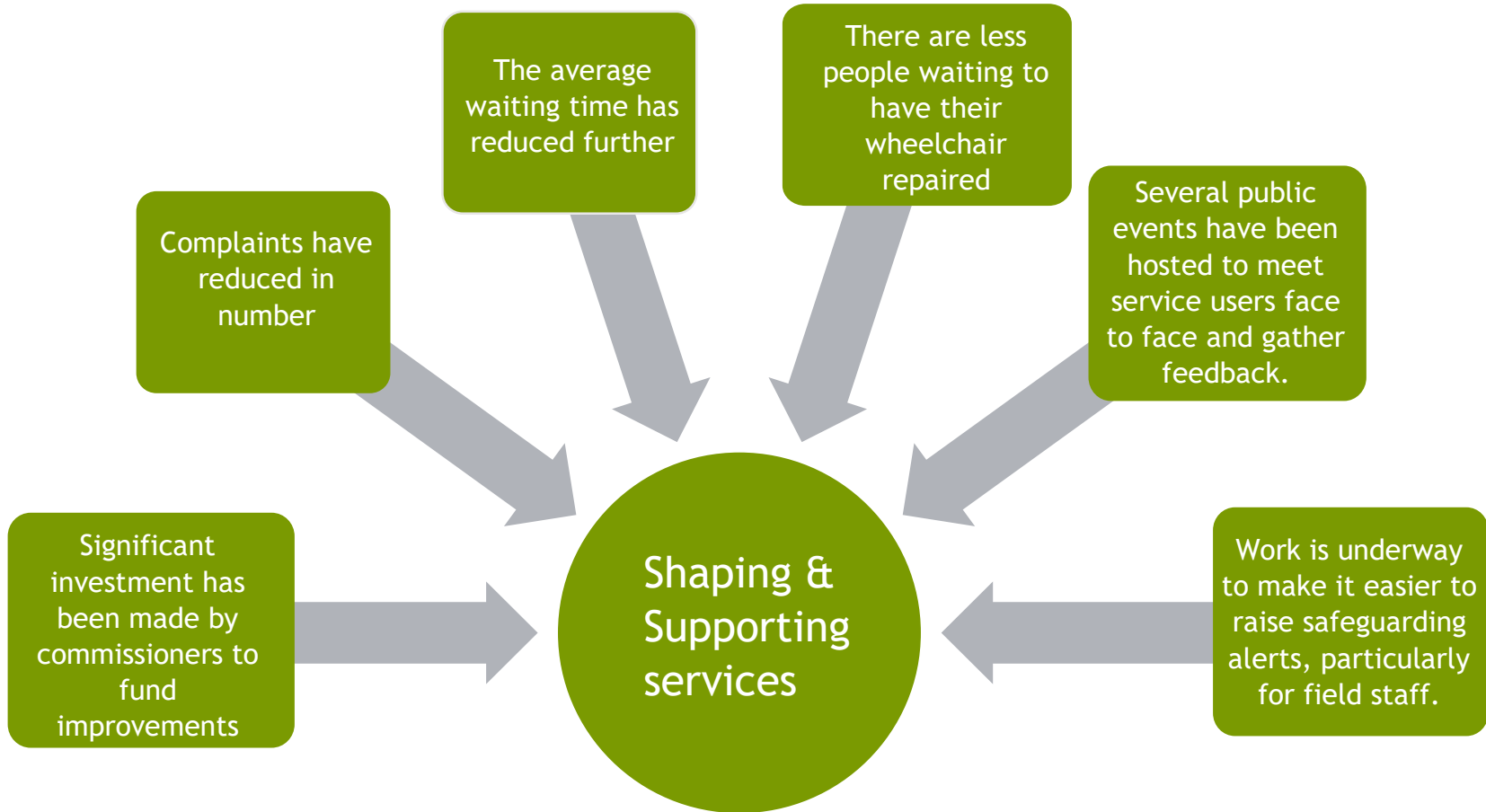
Thanks to your voice, and our intervention, wheelchair services are slowly improving.

There is still much work to be done but so far, we have seen the following improvements:

- The CCG have reviewed the service and made significant investment to fund action and improvements
- The average waiting time for patients to receive a wheelchair has reduced
- The number of people waiting more than 10 days for their wheelchair to be repaired has also reduced
- Millbrook are doing more to hear directly from service users about their experience of the service
- They have organised several events to meet people face to face and gather feedback

- Work is in progress to progress personal wheelchair budgets. Wheelchair users are involved in this plan which should roll out from November 2019
- The number of complaints about the service has reduced and patient feedback is starting to be more positive
- A review of complaints has been completed to explore how the system of responding and learning from complaints can be made better for patient
- Work is underway to make it easier for staff to raise safeguarding alerts

Our highlights



Your voice has made a difference

It starts with you.....tell us your story

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What next?

What else needs to be done

Your views: We will continue to share your experiences of the Wheelchair service and to raise your voice

Listening to you: We will continue to actively gather, listen and acted upon your feedback

Feedback: We'll continue to feedback everything we hear from you to the people who make decisions

Making your voice count

Sign up for our newsletter to receive regular updates

Make your voice heard; share your experience

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