

Email: km.stp@nhs.net
03 May 2019

Steve Inett, Chief Executive

Healthwatch Kent
Church Road
Seabrooke House, Freepost RTLG-UBZB-JUZA
Ashford
TN23 1RD

Dear Steve,

Re: Healthwatch spotlight report: GP services

We read with interest the Healthwatch Kent spotlight report on GP services. It's good to know you have heard positive feedback, as well as the responses we would also expect about challenges patients face with GP services in Kent.

The points highlighted in the report echo feedback we have heard through public engagement events and activities such as the listening events we ran across east Kent from October 2018 to January 2019 and the roving roadshows we continue to hold in supermarkets and other public spaces in north Kent.

The Kent and Medway Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) has ambitious yet achievable plans which will transform primary care in the coming months and years and I'm pleased to report some of the work is already ongoing.

Primary care is the cornerstone of Kent and Medway's vision to deliver better integrated care closer to people's homes where possible, and is central to improving people's health and wellbeing as well as coordinating the care they need. The health and care organisations in Kent and Medway are all committed to sustaining and transforming primary care so that it continues to provide exemplary services to patients and communities long into the future.

We have, in the last year, invested £1.3 million into the STP's plan to make Kent a great place to live, work and learn for the primary care workforce. This covers support for five areas: promoting Kent and Medway as a place to work, encouraging a larger number of GPs to train Kent and stay once they are qualified, increasing the number of GPs who stay with general practice for lifelong careers, improving the culture and leadership, and addressing workload support and retention. Local areas are prioritising spend based on their specific needs. Supporting our workforce to feel happy, healthy and valued is a key way to improve the quality and experience of patient care.

The STP's Primary Care Board is working as a partnership of CCGs, the Kent Local Medical Committee, GPs, the STP Patient and Public Advisory Group and NHS England to support the development of primary care networks which will enable a number of practices to work together to collectively deliver proactive, accessible, coordinated and integrated care to improve patient experience and outcomes. Networks will be small enough to provide the personal care valued by patients and GPs, but large enough to have impact through deeper collaboration between practices and others in the local health and social care system.

This board is also leading the development of a primary care strategy, which fits with the current delivery of our local care plans which bring a wider range of partners together to treat the person as a whole rather than a set of separate health conditions which require health or social care support.

This work has seen significant engagement to date with both those working in primary care, and those wanting to support it to thrive. The board has a patient and public advisor and communications and engagement lead who are supporting the development of wider engagement plans for patients and communities as part of this work, and your report provides a useful snapshot to inform this.

In the coming year, we expect our plan to sustainably transform the quality and experience of primary care services and improve population health outcomes for people across Kent and Medway.

The STP vision is for everyone in Kent and Medway to have a great quality of life by giving them high quality care. We want the population of Kent and Medway to be as healthy, fit and independent as possible, participating in their local economies and communities, and being able to access the right help and support.

To achieve this, we will:

- Transform care - by joining up care so patients receive a better outcome and experience
- Work smarter - together we will unlock more time and money to deliver better care for patients
- Commission consistently – we will lead the development of a strategic commissioner to pay for, design and deliver entire services across a population where it makes sense to do so
- Enable change – we will have the right workforce, buildings, digital technology and finance to support that change to happen.

As pressure on GP services grows for a number of reasons, including patient expectation and an expanding and ageing population, we are committed to ensuring our primary care services change to meet those demands.

Our aim is for primary care to support communities (people) and teams (staff) to feel happy, healthy, valued and supported.

Some of the work we will do to achieve our vision includes:

- The redesign of care – so that we deliver community services and voluntary support around GP practices
- Development of primary care networks (groups of GP practices working together in partnership with the wider health and social care system) – to help GPs to support one another and their patients
- Strengthening leadership capacity and capability – to equip our GPs with the skills to lead others
- Tools for GP practices, primary care networks and GP Federations to use to improve primary care and engage better with their patients and Patient Participation Groups
- Support for primary care networks to develop and strengthen primary care in their area, including digital solutions for patients.

So what will be different for patients?

As we move forward with implementing our vision for primary care, patients will see:

- Improved primary care services and care that is better joined up and not just delivered by a GP or practice nurse
- Better consistency in high quality care
- Easier access to appointments with a variety of clinicians including GPs, nurses, pharmacists, specialist nurses, mental health workers, physician associates and healthcare assistants
- Better access to services in a local setting
- An increase in the number of ways they can get advice from a GP or clinician, including face to face, by telephone, by a video call, through NHS 111
- Improved health and increased independence
- Support and education for patients to navigate the system – through awareness campaigns and also support from care navigators
- Shared care records which will mean patients don't have to keep retelling their story.

We will be involving patients in the development of our transformation projects and know we will make a difference to their experience of primary care in the future.

It isn't something we can change overnight, so in the meantime we hope Healthwatch, our partners, the media and patients can join us to help to support the health and care system. By encouraging others to use the system appropriately and seek out alternatives to GP appointments, we can all make a difference.

We need to take a collective responsibility to reduce the number of people who:

- are using the health care system inappropriately
- book an appointment and then do not attend or cancel it
- aren't aware where they can go for help and support.

With this in mind, we remind anyone who is unsure of where to go for help to call NHS 111 for advice.

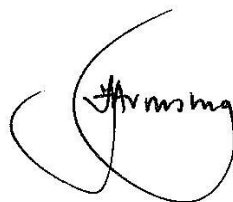
We'd like to thank you for your continued support to ensure health and care continues to improve for patients.

Kind regards



Michael Ridgwell

Deputy Chief Executive



Dr Fiona Armstrong

on behalf of the Primary Care Board

Kent and Medway Sustainability and Transformation Partnership