



# healthwatch

Bath and North East  
Somerset

Healthwatch B&NES report to the Health and  
Wellbeing Select Committee - September 2016

## INTRODUCTION

This report will demonstrate the progress made by Healthwatch B&NES to promote the needs and views of local people. Input from the B&NES Health and Wellbeing Network is included alongside the Healthwatch update, to demonstrate how the views of providers, patients and the public are being woven together by local Healthwatch to create meaningful improvements in how health and social care services work into the future.

Healthwatch is the statutory, independent champion for patients, carers and the public. The Health and Wellbeing Network hosts provider organisations, in both the statutory and voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sectors, to debate current issues and recommend actions for progress.

### **Our current focus**

Healthwatch B&NES is currently working on two of its work priorities for the year: the Accessible Information Standard and urgent care.

#### **1) Accessible Information Standard (AIS)**

The standard was introduced through the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and came into force on 31 July 2016. All NHS and publicly funded adult social care providers have to comply with the legislation, which ensures that patients/ service users with a disability, impairment or sensory loss and their carers receive information in formats that they can understand and have appropriate support to help them communicate.

Healthwatch B&NES is keen to understand the impact that the AIS has on people's experiences of using local services. The challenges that people with disabilities, impairments or sensory loss face when accessing and using services are well documented and recognised nationally as an area that requires improvement. Our project is following two lines:

- gathering feedback from service users and their carers about the experiences they are having
- sharing best practice with providers and commissioners to support continued progress and improvement in complying with the standard

Discussions held with support organisations, such as Action on Hearing Loss and deafPlus/visionPlus, to date suggest that there is still work to do to raise awareness of the AIS and ensure that people know their rights. This - and collecting feedback about people's experiences locally - will be the focus of Healthwatch's work for the next few months through local media channels, social media and face to face discussion.

B&NES Council and NHS BaNES Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) have set up an AIS implementation group which offers providers a forum to share practice and approaches used to comply with the AIS. Healthwatch B&NES has been involved with the forum and has agreed to share feedback from patients and service users with the group to shape and inform compliance with the AIS over time. In the spring Healthwatch B&NES plans to hold a Health and Wellbeing Network to share key themes from the feedback its received with providers to review how the AIS is affecting people's experiences six months after its implementation.

## **2) Urgent care**

The Healthwatch B&NES advisory group has chosen urgent care as one of its priorities for the year, with specific focus on understanding how and why people chose to access the services they do. NHS figures across the south west shows that 40% of inappropriate presentations to Accident & Emergency (A&E) are made by people aged 18-30 and parents of young children.

Healthwatch B&NES is developing a workshop and survey which it will run with these target groups to understand what makes them chose A&E over the other services that are available, and what their experiences are like in doing so. Through these discussions we hope to understand why people chose A&E over services such as NHS 111, NHS Choices and community pharmacists, the three key access points that are promoted for urgent care.

Healthwatch will produce a report capturing the findings of this engagement work in the spring.

## **Update on the Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP)**

Healthwatch B&NES is continuing to work in partnership with Healthwatch Swindon and Healthwatch Wiltshire around the STP. The three Healthwatch schemes see their role as advisory and to provide constructive challenge around the work of the STP Board, with particular focus on the any engagement and consultation that is carried out. We have offered to provide advice to the STP workstream leads in order to help them fulfill their responsibilities in respect to engagement and consultation.

The three Healthwatch schemes are going to produce a guidance note on the 'duty to consult and engage' which we will publish alongside information on STP. We are working to keep our networks up to date with what is happening and share any information from the STP Board and workstreams as it becomes available.

Report prepared by Alex Francis, Project Coordinator - Healthwatch B&NES on Friday 23 September 2016