



healthwatch

Bath and North East
Somerset

Healthwatch B&NES report to the Health and
Wellbeing Select Committee - January 2017

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 B&NES is the statutory, independent champion for patients, carers and the public, it also has responsibility for the B&NES Health and Wellbeing Network, which hosts provider organisations, in both the statutory and voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sectors, to debate current issues and recommend actions for progress.

1) Broadening the Healthwatch B&NES volunteer base and public ‘voice’

In October 2016, Healthwatch B&NES attended a careers fair at Bath Spa University. We had interest from 15 students who were looking for volunteering opportunities and/or to broaden their experience of community projects.

The students expressed an interest in supporting various elements of Healthwatch’s work, including running social media campaigns, supporting delivery of focus groups, developing video and other visual resources to promote the project’s role, and to collect/ represent the views of a range of local people, such as people that use mental health services and people with learning difficulties.

The Healthwatch B&NES volunteer support officer is now working to train the students and support them to become involved with the project. This is a great success and something that we hope will add an extra dimension to the ‘public voice’ that we hear and represent.

2) Learning from patient experience

Healthwatch B&NES is delighted to be working with St. James’s Surgery and BaNES Clinical Commissioning Group to explore what works well when engaging patients in changes to General Practice.

The 26 GP practices in B&NES are among some of the best performing in the country, providing high quality care and patient experience to people across the district. However we know that across the country GP practices are under pressure, with increasing demand on their staff, increasing complexity of patients’ needs and increasing pressure on NHS finances. This pressure is leading to innovation in how General Practice is being delivered both now and in the future, with increased use of technology, more flexibility in the way that health care staff work, and increased collaboration between GP practices suggested as just some of the solutions.

Healthwatch B&NES is keen to make sure that patients are given an opportunity to get involved in any changes that are proposed to their GP practice. We are working with St James’s Surgery in Bath to learn how patients were informed and consulted about changes that took place to their practice last year, for example: what information was provided and how; what approaches were used to gather patient feedback; the type of support that was offered to patients needing assistance to respond; and, how patients were informed of the outcome.

Although only a small cohort of patients are involved in this project, we hope that their experiences will provide key learning that can be translated into local best practice for future consultation. A report of the findings will be presented to the B&NES Joint Primary Care Co-commissioning Committee in March 2017.

Healthwatch B&NES would like to thank the staff and partners at St. James's Surgery for their support and work towards this project.

3) B&NES, Swindon and Wiltshire Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP)

Since the three local Healthwatch (B&NES, Swindon and Wiltshire) began their involvement in this process we have acted as a 'critical friend' to the STP Board and subsequently, the communications and engagement work-stream. Our aims are simple, we are asking for:

- Consistent, accessible and easy to understand information for the public and VCSE colleagues, explaining what the STP is, and the impacts that any plans and proposals may have on the services people use and the care they receive
- Inclusive, meaningful, timely and appropriate engagement with the public and VCSE colleagues on the STP, in order for them to better understand how the health and social care system may be changing and to help shape and influence this based on local need

In a public statement following release of the full STP document in December, the three local Healthwatch said:

"Given the challenges the NHS and social care face, the STP cannot afford to be scared of engaging with the public. We are pleased to see that our STP has committed to engaging with the public and patients. However, your local Healthwatch has concerns about the amount of resource available to deliver public engagement and has raised this with the STP Board.

People tell Healthwatch they recognise the NHS is under pressure and they want to do their bit to help. Even though the plans are still in early stages, those who may have read about the STPs in the press will understandably be concerned about what this means for them. If the STP fails to involve people in any big decisions they will not only face opposition to the changes but they will also miss out on a golden opportunity to make the right changes first time."

Quarter three was a busy period for Healthwatch B&NES with regular attendance at the STP communications and engagement work-stream, and participation in a full day workshop on Friday 2 December where each of the clinical work-streams started talking in more detail about their plans for communication and engagement with the public, VCSE partners and health and social care staff.

The three local Healthwatch in B&NES, Swindon and Wiltshire are committed to working together to support the STP Board and communications and engagement work-stream in an advisory capacity as plans develop and take shape. Local Healthwatch will continue to act as a 'critical friend' to health and social care leaders, in order to support the development of an STP which reflects the needs and involvement of our local population.

Healthwatch B&NES is working to keep local people and VCSE colleagues informed, including updating the website with information about the STP as it emerges, sharing information via social media channels and including information and links to documents in the monthly Healthwatch e-bulletin.

Healthwatch is an independent voice for patients, the public and VCSE colleagues around health and social care. We can be contacted with questions and concerns about this process, and will endeavour to seek a response from the STP Board and programme team.

Report prepared by Alex Francis, Project Coordinator - Healthwatch B&NES on Tuesday 24 January 2017