

### 1) NHS long-term plan

At the national Healthwatch conference in October 2018 Sir Robert Francis QC, Healthwatch England Chair, announced that funding from NHS England would be made available to Local Healthwatch to support public engagement around the NHS long-term plan.

Healthwatch B&NES has expressed an interest in supporting this work locally and aims to work with STP partners to enable public conversation around the next 10 years of NHS provision.

This work, which is still very much in its infancy, will be carried out in conjunction with Local Healthwatch in Swindon and Wiltshire and is due to be completed by summer 2019.

### 2) Healthwatch B&NES Community pot 2018-19

As you are aware, Healthwatch B&NES is an independent consumer champion for health and social care, gathering the views and experiences of local people. However we cannot do this on our own; voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations and groups are absolutely crucial in helping us to reach the local residents and understand how health and social care services are working for them.

In October 2018 we launched our first ever 'community pot', a small grants scheme which offers community-based organisations and groups operating in B&NES the opportunity to receive a one-off grant ranging from £500 to £5,000. This funding will be used to carry out engagement and/or research projects that explore people's experiences of using local health and social care services, particularly those groups or communities who are seldom heard.

We were delighted with the level of interest from VCSE colleagues and the quality of the applications that came through. In early December, the Healthwatch B&NES Executive Board met to review the applications and decide which projects would be funded. In the end we were delighted to be able to fund five applicants who are going to carry out a fascinating range of projects as follows:

- Focus group discussions and one to one interviews to speak to **children aged 16 and under about their feelings and emotions in relation to their mental health**. The target audience will be children and young people who are exclusively home educated, school refusers or who have poor school attendance, and those who have a learning disability.

- Delivery of a training programme to **empower carers to identify the issues that affect them in their caring roles** and produce proactive work plans (both as individuals and a collective) to develop solutions and tackle some of these issues directly with commissioners and/or providers.
- A research project to **explore the experiences of residents who have suffered a bereavement in care homes**, i.e. the death of another resident, and the impact that this has had on their own wellbeing, particularly where that individual may themselves be approaching the end of their life. This project will also explore what bereavement support (if any) is available for care home residents, how residents and/or staff have found it, and what support or services would be beneficial.
- Focus groups, an online survey and a social media campaign to **understand the impacts of rural isolation on young people aged 10 - 25**, particularly those who identify as being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT+).
- Delivery of a **series of public events to explore issues of rurality and access to services** for people living in North East Somerset. These events will focus on topics such as transportation, difficulties in finding care providers, escalating costs for rural postcodes and communication between health and social care services.

We anticipate project work beginning over the next couple of weeks and have requested that all funded projects are completed by the end of August 2019. We hope to be able to share findings and key themes in the autumn and will keep the Committee updated as the projects progress.

### 3) **Developing our working relationship with Virgin Care**

In October 2018, Healthwatch Executive Board members met with Kirsty Matthews, Managing Director, and Lisa Cronan, Lead Nurse/ Quality Lead, at Virgin Care. At this meeting it was agreed that Healthwatch would meet with Virgin Care staff on a quarterly basis to share feedback from the public and seek responses to any points raised. Through these meetings we also hope to develop a greater understanding of one another's services in order to ensure that patients' experiences are captured and people are signposted effectively.

Over the last few months Healthwatch has received an increasing number of requests for information from local residents and professionals who do not know who or how to make contact with local services, particularly adult social care. Requests for information have been received from a range of professionals, including GPs, care home staff, VCSE colleagues, and on occasion, from Virgin Care staff themselves who do not know who to call on behalf of the individuals that they are supporting.

Healthwatch B&NES is currently meeting local NHS Trusts to discuss their Quality Accounts from 2017-18. Through these meetings we hope to receive updates on how the Trusts are progressing their quality priorities and improvements, and explore what impact these

improvements are having on patients and their families. These update meetings will enable us to be better informed about the work that is being carried out in time for the next round of NHS Quality Accounts to be published in the spring.

Healthwatch B&NES Executive Board members are due to meet Virgin Care in late January. We hope to receive feedback and assurance on some of the points that we raised in our formal response to their Quality Account 2017-18, as well as developing our understanding of the improvement work that they are undertaking.

This report was prepared by Alex Francis, Team Manager, Healthwatch B&NES and Healthwatch South Gloucestershire, on Thursday 24 January 2019.