

Mental Health and Primary Care Networks



Healthwatch Harrow Forum Event

23rd January 2020, Harrow Baptist Church

“A good experience at the Early Intervention Service - very focussed and treatment is regular.

However, when we are transferred to Bentley House the system ‘fails’.

Local service user

Healthwatch Harrow Forum, Thursday 23rd January 2020

The Healthwatch Harrow Forum is an opportunity for local people to find out about health and social care services, and to share their views and experiences.

Meeting quarterly, the Forum also helps to shape the priorities and associated work programmes of Healthwatch Harrow.

On Thursday 23rd January, around 50 local people attended the Winter event. Hosted at Harrow Baptist Church, this lively event featured presentations from:

Lennie Dick

Head of Commissioning for Mental Health, Learning Disabilities and Carers at Harrow Clinical Commissioning Group

Donna Adcock

Deputy Chief Nurse at Northwick Park Hospital

Due to unforeseen circumstances, we received apologies from guest speaker:

Tanya Paxton

Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL)

As well as learning about local services and initiatives, delegates were able to share their views and experiences of local mental health and related services.

Feedback - Top Themes

We heard much positive feedback, with accounts of hard working & compassionate staff.

However, the following themes emerged from discussion.

Mental Health Services - Top Themes

- *Services are fragmented, difficult to access and not always responsive.*
- *Levels of communication and general information need to improve.*
- *Cuts to services mean service users and carers are unsupported.*
- *People with mental health conditions can feel 'labelled, judged and dismissed' by health professionals.*

Case Studies

Some delegates shared their recent experiences of services - these illustrate many of the top themes.

“Labelled, judged and dismissed...”

We met a young lady, who has suffered from back pain due to abuse at the age of 13 and depression. She feels she is labelled, judged, dismissed as soon as her history is read and all current symptoms are put down to historical matters. She was once told that her back pain ‘is all in her head’.

She has been left feeling isolated and in fairly constant pain and not supported. When younger she did receive CBT but once she reached 17 it stopped.

“No response from Bentley House...”

Another attendee talked about when her partner had a psychotic episode - she phoned Bentley House constantly and could not get a response. By the time support did come the situation was much worse and required more attention.

The situation was ‘very scary’ for the person involved but also for the person supporting, it was very isolating.

“Service withdrawn and lack of communication...”

We met a resident and his wife, who were unhappy about the recent treatment of their son, in his early thirties, with paranoid schizophrenia.

The son had been attending a weekly activity day (Men's Group) available through the community mental health service. The group arranged social activities for people with similar conditions - trips to galleries and museums etc.

In November 2019, the service was simply withdrawn without any notification 'whatsoever'. We asked the parents specifically whether a phone call or letter was received and they said no.

Lack of notification is one specific issue, the other is that the service was working and people clearly enjoyed it - their son's self esteem and general wellbeing improved dramatically and since the service stopped, it has declined markedly and the parents fear he may be admitted for clinical treatment if not tackled. The other point is, he doesn't understand why the service was withdrawn, he might have taken it personally.

Mental Health Services - What Works, What Could Work Better?

We asked service users and carers to give examples of how services have supported them well, and how any support could have been better.

Service Users

How have services supported you well?

- The Bridge (volunteer service) based in Harrow Wealdstone, has better support.
- The Harrow Admiral Nurse is good.
- Regular treatment and a 'good service' from the Hillingdon Early Intervention Service!

How could services have better supported you?

- Lack of Admiral nurses (down to two).
- Pass the buck still working in Bentley House (REVOLVING DOOR)
- Access to consultant or medication can be difficult.

Carers

How have services supported you well?

- The Bridge - helpful to friends and family.

How could services have better supported you?

- No support networks.
- Lack of respite care.
- No help from the GP.
- No wheelchair access in Elliot Hall in Hatch End GP.
- Struggling with services.
- We have heard details of the creation of a massive administrative machine, acronyms, names, job titles, hubs, etc. yet services are obviously being cut.

General Feedback About Services

Delegates commented on mental health, hospitals, GPs and other services.

Comments - Community Mental Health Services

Pembroke Centre:

"The Harrow and Hillingdon Early Intervention Service is for people aged 14 to 35 experiencing their first episode of psychosis. Once referred, service users can remain with the team for three to five years. Very positive comments about the service received from this centre - more focused, regular treatments - system 'fails' though when transferred to Bentley House."

Bentley House:

"Poor communication - services stopped without any notification."

"Messages left on answerphones are not responded to."

"Continual change of staff means no continuity and time wasted."

"Difficult to get support from Case Co-ordinator."

"Takes too long to get seen or get responses."

General comments:

"Mental health services in Harrow are helpful however, there are improvements to be made."

"The service is not seamless."

"Carers' input is ignored."

"Lack of communication from care co-ordinator or consultant psychiatrist."

"Mental health services have been told to 'get rid of as many people as possible'. My son has autism and needs to see the same person."

"Our son with autism has no activities."

"People have been left without any care co-ordination."

"Waiting lists are too long."

"Withdrawn the social activity support for people with severe mental illness."

Comments - Hospital Services

"Our scan was booked at Ealing Hospital and it takes 1.5 hours to get to. When we got there it was empty! A lot of bus changes, it's so inconvenient we will probably no longer go."

"Discharge from Northwick Park Specialist Unit not co-ordinated with support being in place in the community. No communication between hospital and mental health team. Have to fight to get the right support."

"Parking at the hospital is ALWAYS very difficult."

Comments - GP Services

"No appointments with the GP or nurse."

"Blood test strips have been 'taken away'."

"No clinics for Type 2 Diabetes."

"It has become impossible to make an appointment with a doctor. Receptionists take it upon themselves to carry out triage and decide whether or not you should have a call back from a doctor!"

Other Feedback

"Palliative Care - there should be greater knowledge of the word and it can be 'mis-used' by professionals."

"Housing and homelessness is a big issue in Harrow. A large number of people in emergency accommodation that is not fit for purpose - rats, damp. Difficult to access services and get the support needed if you don't have a home."

"It is important that the current services are not dropped as a result of the new changes."

"One parent was told that she had to make her daughter homeless for her to get support."

"The Samaritans Group offers a good one-to-one service!"

"Social workers not working, and case workers 'stealing' from patients!"

What Next?

We'd like to thank all those who attended this event, and assisted on the day.

All feedback and views collected contribute to our growing evidence base, and feature in our quarterly reports on services. Check our website for the latest insight reports:

<http://healthwatchharrow.co.uk/insight-and-reports>

We would also like to thank the people who took time, to give us detailed personal stories (case studies). Where appropriate, we have liaised with the service providers so that lessons may be learned, and any improvements made.

Your Views?

If you didn't get a chance to attend the event, we'd still like to hear your feedback about local health and social care services.

Simply contact the Healthwatch office:

Healthwatch Harrow
3 Jardine House
Harrovian Business Village
Bessborough Road
Harrow,
HA1 3EX

020 3432 2889
www.healthwatchharrow.co.uk
info@healthwatchharrow.co.uk

Twitter: @HealthwatchHarr

“My partner had a psychotic episode - I phoned Bentley House constantly and could not get a response.

By the time support did come the situation was much worse and required more attention.

The situation was ‘very scary’ for me but also my partner, it felt very isolating.”

Local carer