

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

The BIG Conversation: Our response

Context

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough recognise the financial pressure and growing demand being placed upon our local health and care services. We therefore welcome this public conversation and were happy to support the initial promotion. However, once the election was called, our Healthwatch took a decision to refrain from promoting and commenting on any consultations. This decision was based on advice from Healthwatch England.

We are aware that the local implementation plan for the NHS Long Term Plan will be published early in 2020. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough believe that this conversation being held in, what appears to be, isolation of this plan is a missed opportunity. The local Sustainability and Transformation Partnership is required by this plan to evolve into an Integrated Care System, this conversation does not refer to this shift in its text nor its questions.

This consultation response is based upon feedback received from local people and other organisations and our existing intelligence. In July 2019 we published the ‘What Would You Do?’¹ (WWYD) report which compiled the views of local people on the NHS Long Term Plan. We have used its findings to assist in this response.

The Big Conversation consultation process

Regarding the process we make the following observations:

- We are pleased that the CCG has received a large number of responses to their survey. This demonstrates the very high level of interest that people have in their local health and care services.
- We are disappointed with aspects of the format of the ‘Share your views’ section. Questions were in ‘either /or’ format or gave options but included differing concepts, and sometimes covered multiple issues. In seeking to be simple the options come across as loaded and when broken down could be confusing. In Q 1 for example both options might be appropriate depending on the issue (impeding mobility) or severity (urgency). Yes or No options were implied but not used, e.g. Q7.

¹ <http://www.healthwatchcambridgeshire.co.uk/news/what-would-you-do>

- There were a good number of public meetings held but we are aware that there were very few members of the public at some of these.
- Alternative formats of the consultation documents were not ready until some time later in the process.

Our feedback on the Big Conversation ‘Share your views’ topics

Regarding the topics covered by the 10 questions we make the following comments:

- The referral of patients to secondary care is over-complicated. We hear from many people about problems they experience with this process, particularly with those specialisms in high demand. There is massive opportunity to use digital solutions to improve these processes and decrease their poor experience of longer waiting times.
- People would welcome more follow up appointments by email and telephone. Quite frankly people are bewildered why this is even a question. It is not good use of anyone’s time.
- Our WWYD report clearly tells the story of transport difficulties in most areas of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. More use of digital solutions can help with this. People also want to see more basic services in their communities and are then prepared to travel further for more specialist help. The shift of resources and expertise from hospital to community is essential in making this happen.
- Digital solutions will not be appropriate for everyone however. There needs to be an understanding that not everyone is able to engage digitally and that there are severe connectivity problems in many areas of Cambridgeshire particularly.
- We receive large numbers of stories regarding fragmented care. The system needs to find new models to overcome barriers caused by commissioning and contracts that can result in service duplication or gaps.
- It appears that are huge amounts of money to be saved through better prescribing systems. People tell us they are being given medications they do not want nor request.
- Care needs to be taken to ensure a balance between cost of branded versus generic medicines and effectiveness for individual patients. We are aware that changes of medication can result in side effects that then need further review or medication.
- We welcome action being taken by the CCG and providers of NHS services to relieve the pressures on A&E and would urge more robustness in triaging and getting people to the right place for their health need.

- People want to look after themselves better. Our WWYD report showed that people want more information about this. Information on self-care, self-management and healthy lifestyles is fragmented and often unknown.
- People want to be more involved in decisions about their care. There needs to be a shift to a culture that places the patient voice at the centre of their own care and recognises that the patient is the expert in how their condition affects them.

The findings from the first two Community Values Panels (commissioned by the CCG and delivered by Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough) are reported directly to the CCG prior to publishing in early 2020. The topics we were asked to explore in some depth with the selected panel of 30 local individuals, who together represent the population characteristics of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, were about prescribing and over the counter medicines, and about accessing urgent and emergency care.

The missing question?

We believe that this is a lost opportunity to seek ideas about meaningful patient and public engagement, particularly in light of the emerging Integrated Care System. We note that this conversation did not ask the public about broader engagement with health and care service changes and how to improve potential for co-production.

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is keen to help shape the conversation about how complaints and compliments information can be better shared and used in the future, and how NHS and other care organisations can learn from feedback about integrated care and how to involve people in the design of new services.

Summary

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough understand the need for savings to be made but believe that an integrated health and care system would be cheaper and more effective for patients and provide a better experience for all.

The intentions to build on primary care, use technology better and improve opportunities for shared decision-making and self-care are supported by the feedback we get from local people.

Val Moore (Chair) Sandie Smith (CEO)
Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
18th December 2019

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