Healthwatch Oxfordshire Report to Health Improvement Partnership Board November 2020

Since the last Health Improvement Board meeting in September 2020 Healthwatch Oxfordshire continued to reach out and gather people's experiences of health and social care services in the county. We are in process of recruiting a new Healthwatch Ambassador to the Health Improvement Board, and thank Andy McLellan for his input in the last year.

The following give an overview of our activity during this time.

1. Outreach and communication

Communication has been ongoing throughout Covid, reaching out via networks, community groups, and via Healthwatch Oxfordshire news, and social media. We have made increasing use of Facebook, and other social media platforms to link to networks across the county. We also distributed 700 Covid information leaflets in five community languages via Oxford Community Action food distribution scheme. We are holding '**virtual drop-in**' events to enable people to engage with us online.

From September, staff were able to have face to face contact and undertake focused outreach work, visiting Oxford and Didcot (Now on hold again due to second lockdown).

Focus on Didcot: October saw a geographic outreach focus on Didcot and surrounding areas- including visits to Didcot Community Larder (Sofea) and East Hagbourne Village Hall- speaking to people and distributing 156 packs and surveys. A paper and online survey was distributed, with over 160 responses to date. We also held a 'virtual drop in' where residents could speak to us directly about their experiences. Initial themes emerging reflect concerns with:

- Access to NHS dentistry, with further pressures due to Covid

"I cannot afford a private dentist and I cannot find a dentist taking on NHS patients"

- Concerns with health services keeping up with new housing development
- Limited mental health support in the area, and long waiting times to access
- Impact of Covid on access and experience of health services.
  Comments about accessing GP services were mixed, some finding online, triage and phone consultations easier, and others less so, and experienced delays in getting follow up.
  "I think the e-consultations are brilliant! Very happy with my GP surgery"
  "Much more difficult, everything is taking so much longer from filling in e-consult forms to getting a call-back, to getting a face to face appointment at the surgery or hospital"
  "My husband was not seen due to Covid and ended up in emergency surgery, this could have been avoided if the hospital were willing to see him'

A report will be produced in December. The next geographic focus will be on Chipping Norton in the new year.

2. Recent reports

All reports available on: https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/our-reports/healthwatch-oxfordshire-reports/

- **Let's Talk about Mental Health in Oxfordshire**- published in September 2020, along with responses from OMHP and Oxford Health. The findings of this report- from work carried out in 2019-20- reflect many themes identified in previous national and local reports including high quality, hard-working health care staff, but identify access problems and delays getting the right care at the right time, resource deficits including funding, staffing, system overload, and challenges ensuring continued access/support to follow up care.
  Specifically, in Oxfordshire: • People value caring, supportive, non-judgmental mental health professionals. • Most health sector staff provide outstanding care despite working with constrained resources.
  But… • Access to services is restricted by limited eligibility thresholds, long waiting times, unequal geographic availability, and travel issues • Difficult to access specialised services and Complex Needs Service • Limited support when 'discharged' from services • Some IT equipment and systems used by staff can hinder efficient working, and impact on partnership working • The physical environment in some services has a negative impact on people's experience of services as told to us during Enter & View visits
- **GP Surgeries supporting patients during Covid**- short report highlighted some good practice with GPs working to continue to communicate and engage with PPGs, but also highlighted need for re engagement with PPGs overall.
- **Emotional wellbeing in 0-5's in Oxfordshire.** From responses of 63 parents and carers
  ➢ Comments from families support understanding that mental health and wellbeing of 0-5s is integral to wellbeing of the family as a whole.
  ➢ Families highlighted need for clear signposting, central information and advice about mental health and wellbeing in 0-5s, including local services, and online support. There is scope for improving awareness of existing services and resources such as Oxfordshire Family Information Service.
  ➢ Families valued face to face support from professionals, peers and childcare settings in providing a trusted source of advice, help and relationship.
  ➢ Families noted that stigma, fear of being judged or not being taken seriously could act as barriers to them seeking help. In contrast, they valued support that was timely, person centred, non-judgemental, and supportive.
  ➢ There is room for more support, training and awareness for childcare workers, health professionals and parents on understanding and supporting mental health and wellbeing in 0-5s.

➢ Covid-19 has had an impact on mental health and wellbeing of both parents and young children in multiple ways- which may continue to become clear over time.

➢ Health Visitors and GPs are valued for being first point of contact for support, advice and assessment. Concern noted about impact of temporary redeployment of health visitors during Covid-19, on parents' ability to seek support, and increasing isolation.

3. Current surveys and forthcoming reports:

We are running a number of surveys currently,

- **Support to parents in Oxfordshire** (114 responses to date) Emerging themes: Loneliness and isolation of parents, mental wellbeing, especially for new mothers- accentuated during Covid where peer and face to face support has stopped. Again, raised concern about limited Health Visitor support through Covid.
  "I had my first baby in April. I have had no help or support from health visitor and have had to deal with everything/ work things out for myself. My baby's weight gain stalled. I have tried to ring the health visitor many times this week, including 4 times yesterday and have not heard back at all"
  A brief report will be presented at the Children's Trust Board in December via the Healthwatch Oxfordshire parent ambassador.
- **Employed Home Carer** views (39 responses to date) report due December. Highlighted gap in sourcing PPE for self-employed home carers.
- **Unpaid carers**- looking after someone you know (170 responses to date-report due Jan). Initial themes highlighted: huge impact of caring on physical and mental wellbeing, and highlighted unmet needs for support (45% said they had not received any type of support in the last 12 months), and lack of information about support available, including lack of awareness of carer's assessments (50% had not heard of this).
- **Care Homes and Covid**-follow up from previous report in June, 33 responses to date, report due end November. Initial themes included good practice examples for supporting families to keep in touch with their loved ones- using 'pods', Perspex screens, and virtual communications.
- **Wellbeing- views of Oxford's new and emerging communities.** Joint action research with Oxford Community Action and community volunteers. 152 responses from East Oxford's diverse and multi-ethnic communities. Initial themes highlight: Huge role of faith, family, community in supporting wellbeing. Underlying social determinants impact on wellbeing including housing, financial, immigration, and racism. Huge interest in having support for health and wellbeing. Barriers to getting support include: language barriers, stigma, and lack of culturally tailored support and information. Emphasise need for ongoing and continuous engagement and relationship building with communities to develop culturally appropriate and responsive support. Report due Jan.

- **Using pharmacy**- with focus on Covid- forthcoming report
- **Forthcoming:** Views of **family members and residents of care homes** during Covid- forthcoming engagement- end Nov on, using survey, online and other methods.

4. Feedback on NHS services via Healthwatch Oxfordshire Feedback Centre, phone and email.

- **Access to NHS dentistry and emergency dentistry:** this continues to be a theme we are hearing, particularly during Covid. We have raised the issue with NHS England Commissioner, who have issued recent guidelines to dentists on treatment during Covid. We will continue to monitor this.

"I was wondering if you could help me find an NHS dentist? I have phoned 17 dentists nearest to me that say they are NHS and emailed others to no avail"

"I have contacted all the dentists in my local area and no-one is taking on any adult NHS patients, only children and I am in urgent need of dental treatment"

5. Wider Healthwatch Oxfordshire Activity

- Continued work with Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) to support development and links with GPs, including attendance of virtual meetings and dissemination of information. Currently working with PPGs to assess GP website accessibility and supporting OCCG through PPGs on communications and use of services during Covid.
- Recruitment of new staff member to liaise strategically with the system within Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care System (BOB ICS) working from all Healthwatch groups in the areas concerned.
- Recruitment of Community Outreach worker- delayed due to second Covid lockdown
- Renewal of Healthwatch Oxfordshire website to increase accessibility ongoing
- Continue to engage and hear from residents about access and experiences of using healthcare during Covid. Will support Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (OCCG) to understand people's views over coming months.