

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Information and Signposting Report

Purpose

1. This report sets out background and themes from the information and signposting service from December 2019 to December 2020 and identifies current challenges.

Key issues

2. We saw a significant rise in enquiries requiring signposting. This is due to the cessation of face-to-face engagement due to coronavirus

3. Information and Signposting activity and themes are summarised in sections 8-12
Access to NHS dentistry remains a key issue locally.

4. What people contact us about, and how we support people is in sections 13-18.
Using our contacts to help find answers for people has grown during this period.

5. Service development is covered in sections 19-22. This year has seen closer working with Comms colleagues to develop advice articles for the new websites.

6. Challenges for the service are in sections 23-26. The impact from Covid-19 will have long lasting effects on how people use health and care services.

7. Section 27 deals with the plans for an Information Strategy

Action required by the Board

8. The Board is asked to:

- note the report.

Author

Julie McNeill, Information Manager
6th January 2021

Experiences and signposting activity during 2019-20

8. From April 2018 onwards, patient experiences have been recorded on the Healthwatch CiviCRM system. This data is presented in the Chief Executive's report every two months.

9. Enquiries continue to cover a broad sweep of services but currently we are seeing a sustained number of enquiries relating to access to NHS dentistry.

10. Themes identified:

- Lack of NHS dentists, and concerns about quality of NHS dental work and the NHS/private divide. Covid-19 has had a significant impact on access to NHS dentistry which was already difficult for many people.
- Difficulties in seeing GPs for face-to-face appointments due to changes working practices due to pandemic.
- Increase in people facing long waits for treatment, often with poor communication from providers. Exacerbated by Covid-19.
- Problems with admin processes leading to inaccurate appointment information, multiple and confusing letters.
- Gaps in services: People find they are 'too ill' or 'not ill enough' to access existing services. Particularly a problem in mental health services.

11. From December 2019-December 2020, 1,246 signposts were made to organisations or websites. The three highest number of signposts were to these individual organisations:

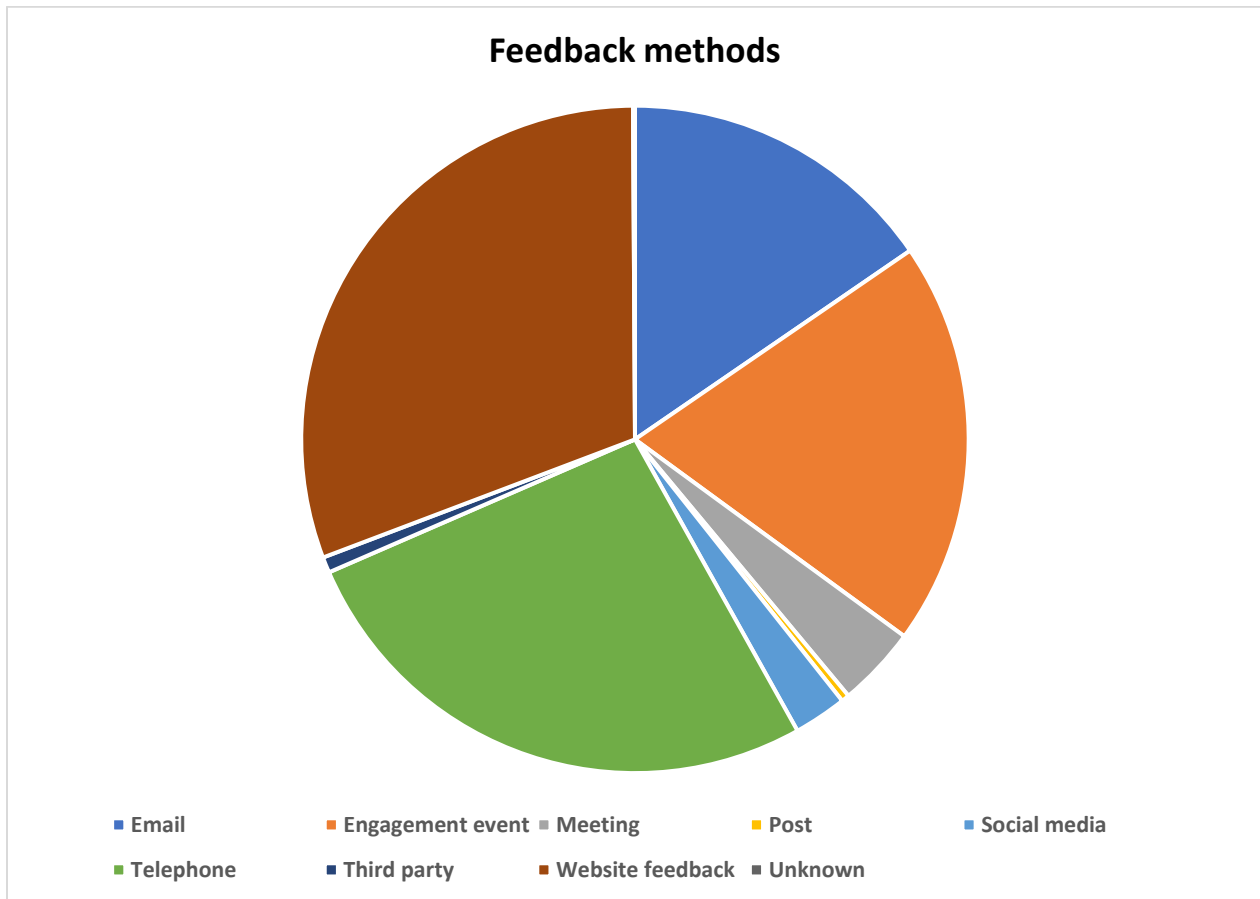
Organisation or resource	Number
The NHS website	155
NHS England & Improvement	147
Patient Advice and Liaison Services/Patient Experience	59

Most of the signposting to the NHS website / NHS England & Improvement was for dental queries. There were also a significant number of signposts to NHS 111 (Herts Urgent Care) as the route to urgent dental treatment.

12. The number of enquiries or pieces of feedback was lower than the previous year, but this is accounted for by the reduced number of surveys from engagement events. Although the volume of enquiries/feedback was lower, they resulted in much more work for the small team as most required conversations and actions rather than just logging on CRM.

How people contact us about their experience

13. The pie chart illustrates the various ways in which people share their story with us.



14. The use of a standard survey for engagement events used to provide most of our feedback. However, since our face-to-face engagement ceased in March 2020 due to the pandemic, the focus has shifted to contact by through our websites and by telephone.

15. This has also led to a much higher percentage of calls resulting in us giving information and advice ('signposting') rather than just logging feedback.

What people contact us about

16. People contact us about a wide range of issues. Some are very complex, involving a range of services and it can be difficult for people to sometimes identify what they want help with first.

17. Although we do not do casework, we have, on occasions, provided a little bit more support or made direct contact with a service on someone's behalf with their consent. We do this when:

- we judge the situation is particularly urgent
- the person is needing a bit of extra help to navigate the system
- much wider/more serious system issues are indicated

18. In the last year we have increasingly used our contacts in the Clinical Commissioning Group and NHS England & Improvement to seek information for patients. This is especially true when trying to understand if a provider's actions are in line with their NHS contract. For example, we had several queries around patient registration at GP practices.

Information and signposting service development

19. We have worked with our Comms team to provide information and advice articles on the two websites. Statistics showed 33,400 people visited our websites to look at advice articles between April-December 2020. The overwhelming majority visited the Peterborough website to search for information about a Covid test, particularly in September. Other popular articles included finding an NHS dentist and information about Coronavirus.

20. Further progress has been made in capturing feedback from group settings such as Health and Care Forums.

21. Involvement in a range of meetings meant we can take patient feedback to the heart of decision making.

22. We have increasingly had our details sent by stakeholders to patients who are experiencing changes to services, mainly primary care services. By collating themes from feedback, we can help improve communication with patients.

Challenges

23. The impact of Covid-19 will be seen for a long time to come as services slowly recover and some changes to services become embedded. This is likely to impact on our Information and Signposting service in both the short and medium term.

24. We expect that dentistry will remain a key area of concern. The emerging Dental Strategy for the East of England should increase access locally, but it is likely to take time to implement.

24. We have begun to hear from people concerned about getting the Covid-19 vaccination, especially where friends and neighbours have received their first dose

and others are still waiting to be contacted contact. This is likely to escalate over the coming weeks.

25. Administrative issues mean that patients can receive multiple and sometimes contradictory letters about appointments. With the mix of virtual and in-person appointments it is vital that communication to patients is clear to avoid wasted journeys or missed appointments.

26. Complex commissioning arrangements make it unclear who provides or commissions a service. Patient 'pathways' are often spoken about but finding out the detail is tricky. If we do not know what should happen, it is difficult to judge if a patient's experience is the norm. The move to becoming an Integrated Care System will also have an impact as services change and develop.

Information Strategy

27. An Information Strategy will be developed in the first part of 2020. This will be an opportunity to continue development of the Information and Signposting service, address the challenges and build on strengths. It will also look at the wider role of information within the organisation.