

Information and Signposting Annual Report

Purpose

This report sets out background and themes from the information and signposting service from April 2022 – March 2023 and identifies current and potential future challenges.

Key issues

The number of people using the information and signposting service remains high. There was a significant increase in feedback coming from engagement events.

Information and Signposting activity and themes are summarised. Access to primary care services, such as GPs and dentistry, remains the key issue locally.

How and what people contact us about, and how we support people. We have continued to use our contacts to help find answers for people.

Service development

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

Action required by the Board

7. The Board is asked to:

- note the report.

Author

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Experiences and signposting activity during 2021

From April 2018 onwards, patient experiences have been recorded on the Healthwatch CiviCRM system.

Enquiries continued to cover a broad sweep of services with a sustained high number of enquiries relating to access to primary care services such as GPs and dentistry.

We logged 2074 pieces of feedback on our CiviCRM. In most cases that represents one person. Occasionally we receive feedback from a group of people. Sometimes one person will give feedback on a few different services. These are logged as several pieces of feedback unless the services are connected.

Themes identified:

- Difficulty accessing GP appointments. Residents report long delays in getting appointments, being told there are no appointments available, or being given a digital appointment even when expressing preference for a face-to-face appointment.
- Difficulty in getting through on the telephone to speak with a GP receptionist. Often residents are placed on hold with no indication of where they are in the queue and frequently report being cut off after waiting long periods of time before getting to speak to someone.
- Long waits for referrals to specialists. Many residents have told us they have waited longer than the advertised time frames for appointments and treatments. They have also told us that they have received little to no communication or updates about their expected waiting time.
- Huge waiting times in Accident & Emergency. Throughout the year we have heard of many residents waiting 10+ hours in the service. It is worth noting though that much of the feedback we recorded for the treatment and care in A&E is positive.
- Lack of NHS dentist appointments. Throughout much of the year, there have been no NHS dental practices taking on new NHS patients. We continue to receive a large number of enquiries requesting help

with finding an NHS dentist for both routine appointments and emergency appointments.

- Dental services pushing private treatments. Many residents report that they are only offered appointments and treatment if they pay privately.

From April 2022 – March 2023, out of the 2074 pieces of feedback we recorded, 500 led to one or more ‘signpostings’. Total number of signpostings was 853 to 138 different organisations.

Organisation or resource	Frequency
1. Healthwatch Cambridgeshire or Peterborough Website	162
2. HUC	65
3. The NHS website	45
4. Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	34
5. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care System	33
6. NHS England	33
7. North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust	30
8. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust	27
9. Voiceability	17
10. East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust	16

We often signpost residents who enquire about finding an NHS dentist to the information and advice articles on our website and the ‘find a dentist’ function on the NHS website.

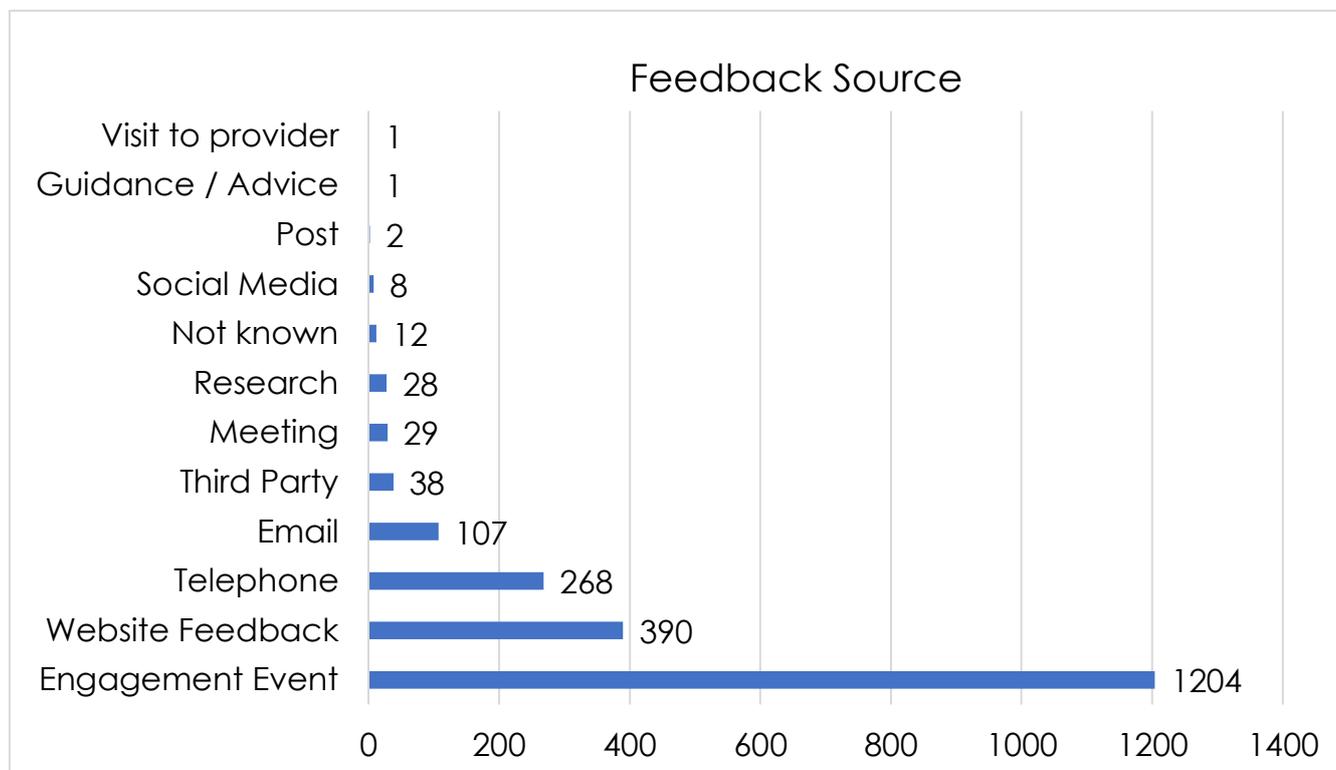
Those who have questions regarding secondary care or would like to complain about their experience are often signposted the appropriate PALS in each NHS Trust and/or the Patient Experience Team at the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care System.

Those wanting to complain about a primary care service advised to resolve this with the service provider in the first instance and to NHS England thereafter. As of April 2023, with the move of commissioning of services, all primary care issues are to be signposted to the CAPICS.

HUC holds the contract for NHS 111 and out of hours services in the area and Voiceability holds the advocacy contract.

How people contact us about their experience.

People can get in touch with the information and signposting service through a variety of different methods, illustrated by the graph below.



Feedback collected through engagement events has more than doubled compared to the previous year. Website and social media feedback has decreased, which could be as a result of vacancies in the Comms team throughout the year.

Service Areas

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

The top ten services residents gave us feedback on were:

1. GP practice	748
2. Dentist (non-hospital)	393
3. Accident & Emergency	113
4. Outpatients'	74
5. Other (Community services)	40
6. Pharmacy	39
7. Inpatient Care	39
8. Ophthalmology	31
9. Child & Adult Mental Health Services	31
10. Ambulance Services	31

Other (community services) includes feedback and enquiries relating to Covid-19 vaccinations.

Although we do not do casework, we do sometimes provide more support to a resident or make direct contact with a service on their behalf, with their consent.

We do this when:

- The situation is particularly urgent.
- The person is needing a bit of extra help to navigate the system and may be unlikely to manage this independently.
- Their issue has not been resolved by the appropriate body.
- More serious system issues are indicated, or issues which potentially could affect more people.

We are increasingly using our connections and contacts in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care Board, as well as other services, to seek information and answers for people.

Some of the issues included:

- Registration issues at GP practices.
- Lack of information around waiting times for hospital appointments and treatments.
- Issues with prescriptions.

- Specialty dentist care in unique cases.
- Accessibility issues within Primary Care.

Information and signposting service development

We continue to work with our comms team to provide information and advice articles on the two websites. There were over 25,000 unique visits to the two websites between April 2022 – March 2023. The most popular information and advice articles were:

Finding an NHS dentist	7859 visits
Out of hours services	2041 visits
Coronavirus testing guidance	905 visits

Further progress has been made in capturing feedback from group settings such as the Health and Care Forums. When capacity allows, a member of the information and signposting team has been attending a forum, all forums have been attended a minimum of once by a team member.

We regularly share the feedback we have recorded on CRM with stakeholders. Primary Care feedback is shared monthly with the Integrated Care Board through a report and a meeting. Feedback on recorded on NHS Trusts is shared with them through a report quarterly. Meetings with the Care Quality Commission, NHS England Dental East, and the County Council allow us to informally share feedback themes, keep up to date with important updates in health and social care, and ensure we have the latest information for signposting to services. Involvement in a range of meetings means we can take patient feedback to the heart of decision making. This also allows us to demonstrate the value of patient feedback in changing services.

We also use the feedback we record to contribute towards larger pieces of work. We have recently contributed our dental feedback and experiences

to a government dental inquiry, which we hope will help to make positive impacts on services.

Stakeholders increasingly include our details on letters to patients around changes to services, mainly when primary care services are retendered. By collating themes from feedback, we can help improve communication with patients and improve future procurements. A recent example of this would be sharing our feedback and proposed amendments to the online FAQs and letters sent out regarding the closure of Priors Field GP. We included information about our service which resulted in many contacts from impacted patients, we then shared their feedback with commissioners. Priors Field GP is no longer closing.

In an effort to record more demographic data about those using our service, we have worked together with the engagement team to reduce the number of questions we ask as they felt that this was off putting to both those asking and answering the questions.

We regularly share a monthly summary of what we have recorded on CRM with the whole Healthwatch team. This helps to highlight the kind of issues and themes we have been hearing about, as well as who we have been hearing from. We hope this helps to organise engagement activities to target people and localities that we hear from less often.

This year we have a new information and signposting officer, Melissa, who works part time, with Anne, to cover the service. We have created a new email address and mailbox that all of us can access to complete our workload. This also has the benefit of one contact for the enquirer meaning their case can be picked up and responded to even if the member of the team they originally spoke to is not working.

Challenges within the service

Throughout the year vacancies in the comms team has meant we have seen a drop off compared to the previous year in the amount of people contacting the service through the website and social media. As we now have two comms managers in post, more time can be spent advertising the service online which should lead to an increase in the number of

people knowing about Healthwatch and using the information and signposting service.

Healthwatch England's offer for the CiviCRM for local Healthwatch has ended as of 31/03/2023. While we have received funding from HWE that will cover the cost of the CRM for the next year, we are looking into alternatives for the future.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is still being felt on health and social care. The lack of access to services, such as GP and dentistry, and the long waiting times for appointments and treatments means patients are often, understandably, frustrated. However, this does occasionally result in those using the service being rude or angry toward team members.

From April 2023, the Integrated Care Board are taking over responsibilities from NHS England for primary care services; dentistry, ophthalmology, and pharmacy. We are yet to see how this will impact services but we do hope it makes a positive impact to the way services run, especially NHS dentistry.