

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Information and Signposting Annual Report

Purpose

1. This report sets out background and themes from the information and signposting service from January - December 2021 and identifies current and potential future challenges.

Key issues

2. We saw a significant rise in enquiries requiring signposting, although the resumption of face-to-face engagement led to more general feedback collected than in 2020.

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

4. How and what people contact us about, and how we support people is in sections 13-17. We have continued to use our contacts to help find answers for people.

5. Service development is covered in sections 18-23. We have recently started to record demographic information on CRM which should help with targeted engagement and communications in the future.

6. Challenges for the service are in sections 24-28. 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

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 continued to cover a broad sweep of services with a sustained high number of enquiries relating to access to NHS dentistry.

10. We logged 2240 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.

11. 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 locally.
- Difficulties in getting through to GP practices by telephone with long waits and often being told to call again the next day.
- Difficulties in seeing GPs for face-to-face appointments due to changes in 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.
- Emerging concerns about the quality of care services.
- Issues around communications and access to Covid-19 vaccinations. Announcements by central government has led in an increase in expectations from people about the speed of the roll out and local availability. We have been particularly concerned about access to Covid vaccinations/boosters for people who are housebound.
- Gaps in services where people find they are 'too ill' or 'not ill enough' to access existing services. Particularly a problem in mental health services and where dual diagnosis is involved. We hope YOUNited will help children and young people get to the service they need more quickly.

12. From January 2021-December 2021, out of the 2240 pieces of feedback, 1170 led to one or more 'signpostings'. Total number of signpostings was 3318 to 232 different organisations.

This table lists the top ten organisations we signposted people to by volume:

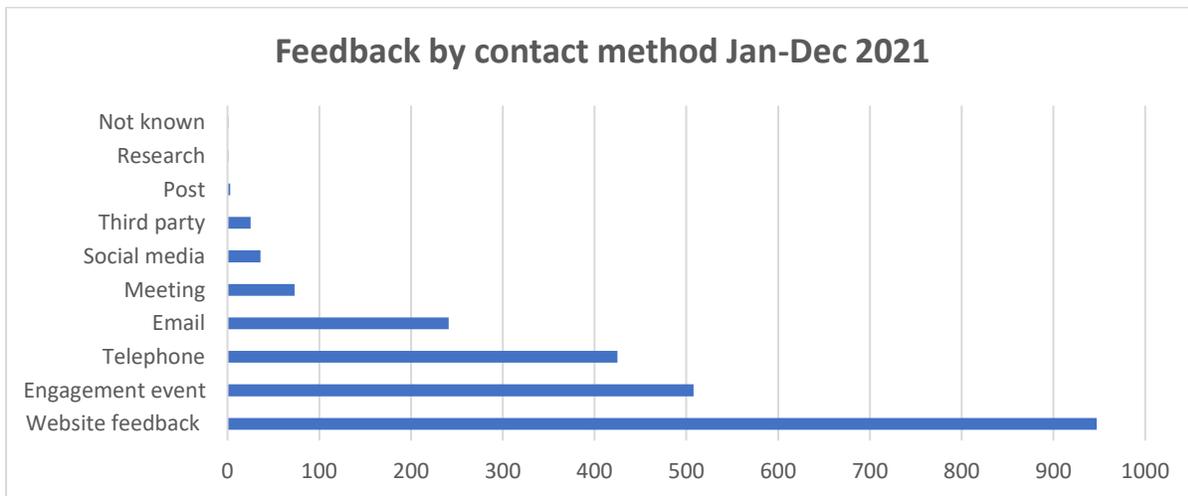
Organisation or resource	Number
NHS England	770
HUC	693
Dental Choices	500
The NHS website	335
Healthwatch Cambridgeshire	113
Healthwatch Peterborough	92
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group	73
Voiceability	55
Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust	52
North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust	48

The top four are mostly because of the high number people contacting us about access to NHS dentistry. We also direct people to advice and information articles on our websites.

Voiceability have the advocacy contract locally, and Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust has the contract for the large-scale vaccination centres and also the Dental Access Centres.

How people contact us about their experience

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



14. The return to face-to-face engagement made an impact on experiences collected, as illustrated by the chart, compared to 2020.

What people contact us about

15. 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. Others are more straightforward.

The top three services people gave us feedback on were:

Dentist (non-hospital)	829
GP practice	577
Other (Community services)	231

Other (Community Services) includes feedback on Covid-19 vaccinations.

16. Although we do not do casework, we have on occasions, provided more support or made direct contact with a service on someone’s 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 be able to manage this independently
- more serious system issues are indicated, or issue which potentially could affect more people

17. In the last year we have increasingly used our contacts in the Clinical Commissioning Group and NHS England & Improvement to seek information for patients.

Some of the issues included:

- patient registration issues at GP practices.
- lack of information around waits for hospital or diagnostic procedures.
- lack of information from housebound people about when they will receive their Covid-19 vaccination.
- access to domiciliary or special care dentistry when cannot find a dentist to see them/refer into services.

Information and signposting service development

18. We continue to work with our Comms team to provide information and advice articles on the two websites. There were over 35,000 unique visits to the two websites to look at advice articles between Jan-December 2021. The most popular articles were:

Article	Cambridgeshire site	Peterborough site	Total
Testing coronavirus	3,036	10,205	13,241
Finding an NHS dentist Cambridgeshire / Peterborough	6,528	6,022	12,550

19. Further progress has been made in capturing feedback from group settings such as the Health and Care Forums. When capacity allows, it would be good to ensure a team member can attend each Forum at least once a year.

20. 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.

21. Stakeholders (such as the CCG), 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.

22. We have started to record demographical information on our CiviCRM. This is about people who share their own feedback, or about the person receiving the care if they are sharing feedback about someone else. This has only been in place for a short period but as time passes it will help identify who we are hearing from and those people we hear from less often.

23. This year Sharon, our Administrative Assistant, has started helping log feedback on CiviCRM. Given the amount of feedback received this year this has been a great support to Anne and me.

Challenges

24. 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 the Information and Signposting service in both the short and medium term. In the short-term (until end of March) the CCG is using GP Winter Funds to provide a patient helpdesk to take calls from people waiting for diagnostics or procedures in secondary care. We are part of the steering group and used patient feedback to explain some of the issues people have been facing.

25. We expect that dentistry to remain a key area of concern. The regional dental strategy for the East of England should increase access locally, but it is taking time to implement. There are also concerns that making Covid-19 vaccinations mandatory will result in dental staff leaving the profession.

26. The formal move to an Integrated Care System (ICS) will bring opportunities but also challenges as the ICS will take over responsibilities for some services from NHS England and NHS Improvement like NHS dental services. There is also the potential for patient pathways to differ across the area.

27. At the end of March 2023 it is expected that Healthwatch England's offer of the CiviCRM to local Healthwatch will end. This will mean finding a new system to record contacts, feedback and activity, and associated training for all staff.

28. Capacity to deliver the service may also be a challenge in the future if the current demand continues.