

## UPDATE REPORT FROM HEALTHWATCH – 18 OCTOBER 2022

### Current themes

Looking at the data we have gathered (July – September 22) access to services remains the top issue, with residents talking to us about appointment availability and how appointments can be booked. The majority of this feedback relates to GP practices.

#### GP Access.

- In speaking with residents as part of our return to face-to-face engagement, access continues to still be one of the key issues which residents talk about. The impact for patients with disabilities not being able to engage with reception staff (in a number of practices) face-to-face means they are not able to communicate with their practice and concerns relate to undiagnosed conditions/longer term health impacts.
- Online access using the e-consult facility continues to be another issue being raised. In contacting practices by telephone, patients are often advised to use the online service. Patients who choose to do this, give up their position in the telephone queue, go online, only to find that this service is unavailable. Our recent mapping exercise to review this further has now been completed. We undertook a non-scientific/simple process of just logging onto GP practice websites at various points in the day (2 practices per locality) during July and August. Although a short and simple exercise, the following practices had their e-consult facility turned off consistently (Ainsdale Medical Centre/ The Village Surgery/ High Pastures/ Ford Medical Centre/ Glovers Lane)/ We have shared this information with the Sefton Primary Care Committee and await an update.
- Our National Director, Louise Ansari, has responded to the recently published 'Plan for Patients' stressing that GP practices must be supported ahead of what's expected to be a challenging winter;  
 "GP access is by far the most common frustration people have been raising with us for the last two years, and we know barriers at the front door of the NHS can create very serious problems further down the line. Bringing in more support staff and improving phonelines will provide much needed reinforcements for GP surgeries and help them make the process of getting an appointment more efficient and easier for everyone. As we head into the winter months the NHS is going to face pressures across the whole system, while managing the backlog in diagnostics and surgery that built up as a result of the pandemic. GP practices, as the vital first port of call for most people, need to be supported to make sure everyone who needs care is able to access it in a timely and appropriate way."

### Access to NHS Dentistry

- For August and September, contact with our Signposting and Information service about access to dentistry has dropped to 28% and 33% of total contacts respectively.
- Following a meeting with NHS England, we have been recording incidences of cases unable to get complete care after being seen by an emergency dentist. We have recorded 5 contacts of this type during August and September.
- Other cases of concern are patients with an existing condition that is being impacted by lack of access to dental care. For example a cancer patient unable to start treatment without a dental check (NHSE were able to help in this case), a patient with diabetes losing teeth, patients with mental health issues and/or weight loss due to dental health issues.

### Aintree Hospital Accident & Emergency Department

- We have been picking up feedback about accessing emergency care at Aintree Hospital. Healthwatch Sefton was invited into the department by the trust and on the 22<sup>nd</sup> August, we attended to undertake an observational visit. A report has been submitted to the Trust which includes observations and areas which we suggest could improve experience and we await their response.

### **Operational updates**

#### Home care – feedback from our residents

This project has commenced and we are contacting 100 residents who currently receive home care offering the opportunity to share their feedback on how they find the support and care they receive in their own homes. An update will be provided within our next report.

#### John Turner (volunteer Chairperson)

John is working through his induction and has attended his first meeting of the Health & Well Being Board. John has numerous meetings in the diary with key stakeholders to make local introductions.

### **Diane Blair BA (Hons) MSc**

Manager

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