

**UPDATE REPORT FROM HEALTHWATCH SEFTON – 17 OCTOBER 2023****Emerging issues which we have picked up in our key issues log.**

Alongside our work plan we have a key issues log which details emerging themes/issues which we have agreed to look into/ observe further. We have shared them with both providers involved and commissioners to provide additionality to quality improvement work/ make them aware of the issues people and communities are raising with us.

Phlebotomy services for children under 12 years of age (Southport and Formby)

This issue came from enquires through our signposting and information service. GPs have been referring parents to access Phlebotomy from Southport and Ormskirk Hospital NHS Trust, despite this service ceasing a few years ago. Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust do not offer phlebotomy services for under 12s. Parents are being signposted in one direction and then another, lengthening the time before their child can access their much needed blood test.

We have found out that paediatric bloods for south Sefton residents (u12s) are offered by Alder Hey. For the north of the borough, Formby Village Surgery offer a service, but Southport and Formby residents can also choose to access the Alder Hey service. We have been working with colleagues from Sefton Place to get communications included within the GP Bulletin to reinforce pathway options, which will also include information about the Phlebotomy offer for over 12's from the Southport & Formby 7-day access service.

Poor experiences of navigating and accessing local Physiotherapy services.

There appear to be problems with patients now knowing that they should have self-referred themselves into the service. The first point of contact process for physiotherapy services is confusing and appears to be the result of a lack of communication, patients assuming appointments will be booked in automatically, whilst in reality they should have been told that they should contact the service/make a self-referral. Navigating the service is difficult and treatment has been reported as poor, for example one appointment offered then patient is discharged. It is difficult to access senior physios after an initial assessment through the service, and this can cause delays to injury diagnosis.

Gastroenterology (Liverpool University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust).

We have had a small number of concerns (six) raised since March 2022. Two relate to formal complaints submitted to Aintree hospital following loss of relatives after a cancer diagnosis at a late stage. Three have involved difficulties communicating with and accessing diagnosis from the department at Aintree, with one patient receiving no diagnosis following 3 visits to A&E, the patient eventually gaining a diagnosis at a private clinic and is now on an NHS pathway there. We have shared this with the Sefton

People and Communities group and have asked if the provider continues to have oversight of the issues with this service line.

### Dermatology (Vita Health).

Delays have been reported for patients waiting for Basal Cell Carcinoma appointments and treatment. This issue has been raised previously but the new provider appears to continue to have issues relating to this area of Dermatology. We have shared this with the provider direct and will be keeping this on our radar to examine if similar feedback is shared.

### GP Access

We continue to receive feedback about access, and have recently shared an in-depth patient story which a resident wanted to share:

<https://healthwatchsefton.co.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2023/09/Read-one-Sefton-Residents-story-Full-Story-PDF.pdf>

We have shared this with the place based primary care team and recently attended the South Sefton Primary Care Practice Managers meeting. We asked practice managers to engage with us on a pilot to use texts to gain more feedback and to sign up to our feedback centre but unfortunately there was little interest. This is different for practices across Southport and Formby, where we have seen an increase in the number of practices engaging on our online system and have a couple of practices who are keen to engage in our feedback pilot.

### Accessibility support for patients from Sefton GP practices

An increasing trend is emerging both locally and nationally linked to a lack of accessibility support for patients contacting their practices by telephone. We have been receiving feedback from people who are supporting clients who are Deaf about the lack of support which local reception staff are providing to put in reasonable adjustments for patients. We have also received feedback from patients who are recovering or have long lasting symptoms following a stroke, patients who have Aphasia for example and are finding it difficult to use the phone system to book their appointments. Nationally, STAMMA (the UK's national charity for people who stammer) has found that people who stammer face significant difficulties when trying to book a doctor's appointment. Difficulties which have led to distress, delayed appointments and even misdiagnosis.

### Dental Access

44% of all calls into our Signposting and Information service during August related to dental. An emerging theme is access for children and young people with mental health conditions who are struggling to access care and treatment. We have shared this with our local dental team.

New official figures have highlighted that NHS dentists are still seeing significantly fewer people than before the pandemic. Healthwatch England CEO Louise Ansari said this showed that "people in every corner of England are struggling to get the dental treatment they need, when they need it".

<https://healthwatchsefton.co.uk/news/healthwatch-englands-response-to-annual-report-on-nhs-dental-statistics/>

Regular meetings with key personal from NHS Cheshire and Merseyside, including the lead for dentistry are not in place with all local Healthwatch.

### Mersey & West Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust.

We will no longer be holding monthly engagement stands at Southport & Formby Hospital. We will be planning on holding 'Listening Event' style events as an alternative which will support us to capture more in-depth feedback on emerging themes and trends. We have attended two meetings of the trusts 'Patient Experience Council', with the first Informal meeting with local Healthwatch taking place 11<sup>th</sup> October.

### Liverpool University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

We have made a similar decision with our monthly engagement stands at Aintree University Hospital and will be undertaking Listening Events at the trust. We are also undertaking a 'walk around' of the Accident and Emergency Department at Aintree University Hospital in early November. We have recently held a meeting with the Deputy Director for Estates and have regular meetings scheduled moving forward. At this meeting we were able to update on issues relating to the promotion of free parking for blue badge holders, talk about the pay machine in the multi-story car park being out of order since January and other issues including impact of car park costs when clinics significantly overrun, parking on the Aintree site and the need for support with way finding at the Hotel Entrance. A number of actions were agreed to progress the issues raised and we will report on them in our next report.

### Alder Hey NHS Foundation Trust.

We have alerted the trust of issues with their pharmacy/ repeat prescription service and have been working with our steering group partner, 'Sefton Parent Carer Forum', to gather feedback. A report has been submitted to the trusts Director of Nursing and their response is currently being reviewed by our Operations Group.

### Liverpool Women's NHS Foundation Trust.

Working in partnership with Healthwatch Liverpool and the trust, a Listening Event was held, Monday 10th July. We met with the patient experience team, spoke with the 'Non-English Speaking Team, (NEST), sampled the lunch menu and visited wards, outpatient departments and the Neo-natal department to speak to patients, family members and staff. A report is being drafted by Healthwatch Liverpool and will be available shortly which includes a number of recommendations.

### Healthwatch Sefton Operations Group

Our Steering Group meeting has changed its name to the 'Operations Group' and in September we received 2 presentations. Rebecca McCullough, Assistant Director of Finance updated on how finances work in our new NHS structures and Helen Armitage, Consultant in Public Health, updated on the hazards of vaping which is something members wanted to focus on.

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