



TEAM REPORT

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We popped along to the launch of the latest prospectus of courses being offered by the Compass Recovery College. The courses are available to people living with mental health needs and cover creative

activities such as pottery, information sessions about a specific diagnose such as bipolar, advice on life skills such as getting back to work, or general wellbeing topics such as happiness.

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We went along to a public consultation meeting run by Reading Borough Council about our own future. The council wants to run Healthwatch Reading, and Healthwatch Wokingham as one organisation. See our full report on page 3 of this newsletter to find out what local people think of these plans.

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Our advocacy services manager Carl Borges (pictured) met social workers and other professionals working in Reading's adult social services teams, to explain our role in empowering people who may be vulnerable through age, disability or other issues, to



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have their say about care and support they need in their lives. These kinds of meetings are really useful in building understanding about each other's roles and how we can work together to improve outcomes for clients.

We had a BBC TV crew into our offices to interview us about the Prospect Park patient experience project we carried out in partnership with other local Healthwatch across Berkshire. We're pleased that the views of mental health inpatients have been given a proper public airing on both television and radio - they shined a light on the positive, individual care they get from staff but also the negative impact that understaffing can have on the ward environment. See our full report on page 3 of this newsletter.

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We visited two local care homes to speak to staff about our upcoming visits to talk to patients about their daily life and care, as part of our latest listening project. We have 'Enter and View' powers to allow us to visit care homes, GP surgeries and hospitals, and we plan these with managers in advance to explain why the experiences we collect can be useful learning exercises for their organisations. If you have a family member staying in a care home in Reading, we'd welcome your feedback.

HEALTHWATCH READING IS EXPANDING

Healthwatch Reading will expand from 1 April 2018 to provide two extra types of advocacy to local people to help them know their rights, have their say, or have someone speak up on their behalf if they are unable to.

The new services are:

- Statutory Independent Mental Health Advocates (IMHAs), for people who are held under section for psychiatric assessment and treatment, at Prospect Park Hospital;

- Social Care Complaints Advocates, for people needing help to resolve concerns or complaints with adult social services run by Reading Borough Council.

Healthwatch Reading will also continue to provide statutory NHS Complaints Advocacy - a service it began running in 2014, and also carry on coordinating statutory Care Act Advocacy, in partnership with Age UK Reading and learning disability charity Talkback.



**A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF THE HEALTHWATCH READING HELPLINE**

Caller 1: "Why can't I get a timely appointment with my GP? They don't seem to have enough staff."

Our advice: In the first instance, call the surgery's practice manager. If this doesn't resolve the issue, we might be able to contact the surgery on your behalf or explain how you can make a formal complaint. We can also take collated anonymous feedback to the Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Groups - which oversee GP surgeries - and ask them to investigate.

Caller 2: "I've been admitted to the Royal Berks and I keep getting mixed messages from staff on what's wrong with me and when I'll be able to go home. How do I get it sorted?"

Our advice: Ask to speak to the ward sister (the senior nurse in charge) and if that doesn't resolve your concern, contact the hospital's Patient Advice and Liaison (PALS) team on 0118 322 8338 or email talktous@royalberkshire.nhs.uk. PALS also has leaflets in Punjabi, Nepalese & Polish.

Caller 3: "I think I've been overcharged by my NHS dentist - what can I do?"

Our advice: The official list of charges is at: <https://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcosts/Pages/Dentalcosts> and we've also referred people to the very helpful national charity Oral Health Foundation helpline, on 01788539780.

Caller 4: "I don't think the mental health crisis team is taking me seriously. I keep calling them asking for help but nothing changes and I feel so bad."

Our advice: The crisis team is run by Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, which has a PALS department to deal with patient concerns or complaints, at 0118 960 5027 or email BHT@berkshire.nhs.uk. If you're too unwell to make a complaint yourself, Healthwatch Reading can provide a free advocate to support you or speak up on your behalf, or, if you prefer, we can pass anonymous feedback to the trust as part of our work campaigning for local improvements. You can also call The Samaritans anytime, from any phone, for free on 116 123.

Caller 5: "I don't think my elderly father is getting the care he's entitled to because social services haven't assessed him properly. I mentioned my concerns to the social worker but it hasn't made any difference. What is my dad entitled to and how can I help him get it?"

Our advice: New legislation called the Care Act 2014, aims to put a person's 'wellbeing' at the centre of decision-making about their care needs. There are many fact-sheets about this legislation and people's rights, if you search on the national charity websites: www.ageuk.org.uk, www.disabilityrightsuk.org or www.carersuk.org. If you decide you want to formally complain, you can contact Reading Borough Council's customer relations team on 0118 937 2905, email socialcare.complaints@reading.gov.uk or visit <http://www.reading.gov.uk/complaints>.

Caller 6: "I think the hospital needs to compensate me because they made a serious mistake with my treatment. How do I make a claim?"

Our advice: Healthwatch Reading's NHS complaints advocates can help you get explanations, apologies or changes to your care, but our service does not cover help to make compensation claims. However, you can get free advice from the national patient safety charity AVMA (Action Against Medical Accidents) at www.avma.org.uk or telephone their helpline on 0845 123 2352.

Caller 7: "I've been waiting months now for my operation and my symptoms are getting worse. Am I entitled to get my operation any sooner?"

Our advice: People's rights to care within certain timeframes, are set out in The Handbook to the NHS Constitution, available online at <http://bit.ly/2DFilsE>. If you think your rights are being breached you could contact the hospital's PALS department but you should also go back to your GP to discuss your worsening symptoms. You could also check if your health need is being treated according to national guidance that organisations like the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) publish for the NHS to follow. Our team can't give medical advice, but we can help you get answers to your questions.





WE REVEAL EXPERIENCES OF PROSPECT PARK PATIENTS AFTER VISITING PEOPLE ON WARDS

Most inpatients on Prospect Park psychiatric wards feel staff treat them kindly but say nurse shortages are affecting their care, according to a patient experience project carried out by Healthwatch Reading and five other local Healthwatch across Berkshire.

More than 40 voluntary or sectioned patients shared their stories with Healthwatch staff and volunteers during visits to four different wards over seven days in late October 2017.

The findings, published in a report on 25 January 2018, show 81% of people (29 out of 36) said they felt hospital staff treated them with dignity and respect, but 62% said they had not had their care and treatment plan explained to them and 8 in 10 had not been given a date for their discharge from hospital.

One patient told Healthwatch: "So far all the staff have treated me with dignity and respect. I was concerned about this as I had a number of issues

with staff on a previous stay.... However there has been a big improvement in the attitude and attentiveness of staff. This has eased my stress levels considerably, the only problem is that the ward is often short-staffed so it is the staff who end up getting stressed. More often than not the staff-to-patient ratio is lower than it should be and it can get chaotic on the ward."

Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (BHFT), which runs Prospect Park Hospital, has formally responded to 10 recommendations from the six local Healthwatch. It said: 'There is a national shortage of band 5 newly qualified mental health nurses and this is reflected in the vacancies at Prospect Park Hospital.' There would also be a four-year wait for new nurses to be trained and local NHS funders had no plans to give the trust any more funding for extra staff.

If you would like to read the full report please call our Office on 0018 937 2295 and a copy will be sent to you.

READING & WOKINGHAM PEOPLE SPEAK UP ON THE FUTURE OF THEIR LOCAL HEALTHWATCH

Residents in Reading and Wokingham have raised concerns that they will lose a locally-focused health and care watchdog if their councils go ahead with a plan to make two separate Healthwatch work as one organisation to save £44,000.

One Reading person used Twitter to give feedback about the plans, on 18 January: "Personal&professional service I've received fr @HealthwatchRdg has been helpful for my recovery after being hurt badly by [local NHS] service. It should remain local to serve vulnerable ppl who can't travel. Local knowledge&connections r important for efficiency&effectiveness."

People attending a public meeting run by Reading Borough Council (RBC) on 15 January, also said:

- Healthwatch must remain local
- Healthwatch Reading speaks up for local people and holds services to account
- Healthwatch Reading is approachable and

independent

- Healthwatch Reading provides support on individual casework
- The savings proposed do not justify the time and expense involved in creating a new single organisation
- Healthwatch Reading has already had its budget cut, so this proposal would mean a further reduction, while Healthwatch Wokingham has not had any funding cut previously
- The population of each area are very different so a single service could be risky.

RBC plans to seek further public feedback, at the Reading Older People's Working Group on 2 February, from 2-4pm at the Civic Centre on Bridge Street.

You can formally respond to the RBC consultation by 6 February. Please call RBC on 0118 937 2383 for a paper copy or phone us to pass on comments.





LATEST QUALITY RATINGS FOR LOCAL SERVICES

Here are the latest ratings for Reading services from the Care Quality Commission (CQC):



Peppard Road Surgery has been rated 'good' following its latest full inspection. The Caversham based surgery has been praised for providing its patients 'outstanding access to appointments'. However they have been ordered to store medicines in a specially designed fridge, rather than a household fridge, and to replace out-of-date emergency oxygen.

Report published 5 January 2018

Priory Avenue Surgery is to remain in 'special measures'. The CQC stated that the surgery's leadership was still 'inadequate' and that 'insufficient improvements had been made'. The latest inspection found that staff had acted as chaperones for patients without knowing how to carry out this role appropriately, and some treatment and clinical rooms were not clean. Staff were observed being courteous and helpful to patients but results from the national GP patient survey

showed below-average satisfaction scores relating to consultations, and a decrease in overall patient satisfaction with the surgery.

Report published 10 January 2018

The Royal Berkshire Hospital has been rated 'outstanding' with inspectors reporting that it has made 'significant improvement'. The hospital is part of the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust (RBFT), which overall is now rated 'good'. The CQC rated the following parts of the hospital as 'Outstanding':

- Medical care (including older people's care)
- Outpatients

Both areas were previously rated as 'Requires improvement'. Patients at the hospital told inspectors that staff 'went the extra mile', and the trust had been rated 'outstanding' for being 'caring'.

Report published 15 December 2017

The CQC is the national body that checks how NHS and social care services are performing.

All health and social care providers must be registered with the CQC.

UPCOMING EVENTS IN FEBRUARY

Friday 2 February 2018

Public Meeting-Local Healthwatch for Reading & Wokingham Consultation (as part of the Older People's Working Group), 2-4pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Bridge Street, RG1 2LU.

Tuesday 6 February 2018

Local Healthwatch for Reading and Wokingham Consultation closes, for more information and to have your say, please call Reading Borough Council on 0118 937 2383.

Wednesday 14 February 2018

Fundraising Tea Dance, 1.30-3.30pm, The Maples day centre for older people, Rivermead Leisure Centre, Richfield Avenue, Reading, RG1 8EQ. Everyone is welcome - go along to dance, or just relax and enjoy the live singing and raffle. Event tickets are £5, book by telephoning Sarah on 07580870945 or Ellie on 0118 9374894.

Wednesday 21 February 2018

Let's make Reading friendlier, 5-8pm at Reading Town Hall. An event to explore ways to reduce loneliness and social isolation. For more information please call 0118 937 2054.

If you would like to publicise an upcoming event via our newsletter or website, please contact us on 0118 937 2295 or email info@healthwatchreading.co.uk

