

TEAM REPORT

We help Circuit Lane and Priory Avenue patients put forward concerns



During December, we helped put forward patients' concerns about the service at Circuit Lane Surgery in Southcote and Priory Avenue Surgery in Caversham. A new organisation called OneMedicalGroup took over both surgeries from 1 September 2016. Patients have told us they have experienced long waits for repeat prescriptions, difficulties getting through on the phone and not being able to get timely appointments. One patient also spoke up in a BBC South Today television news item about problems on the first day of a new 'walk-in clinic' for urgent problems at Circuit Lane in mid-December.

Healthwatch Reading had called a meeting in late November with officials at North and West Reading Clinical Commissioning Group, which oversees the contract with OneMedicalGroup. We passed on patient concerns and requested:

- better availability of appointments, particularly for unwell children
- repeat prescription turnaround within 48 hours, and communication with patients about current timeframes while a backlog is cleared

- transparency over which staff are working at the surgeries, including any non-GP staff taking over some GP duties, such as nurse or pharmacists
- better complaints handling.

We also raised concerns at the open meeting of the Primary Care Commissioning Committee, on 7 December and offered to support officials to develop quality measures to help understand patient experience.

In late December we then met with OneMedicalGroup to share ideas on what information and assurances patients needed to understand the new way of working at both surgeries. We hope the meeting will lead to more detailed information being communicated in the New Year in a better way with patients about plans to improve services at the surgery. In the meantime, we were told patients should address any initial concerns to the full-time deputy practice managers at each surgery. Patients can also contact Healthwatch Reading to give feedback or get support to make any complaints by phoning 0118 937 2295 or emailing info@healthwatchreading.co.uk.

Problems at the surgeries stretch back a few years, related to problems recruiting permanent GPs and a high reliance on locums and lack of communication with patients about changes. We hope the recent calls from patients for improvements will lead to an immediate turnaround.

Healthwatch Reading submits questions on hydrotherapy pool closure

Earlier in the month, we also helped patients put forward concerns on another issue: the closure of the hydrotherapy pool at the Royal Berkshire Hospital.





Members of the public had contacted Healthwatch Reading to say the closure would be a big loss to:

- outpatients who are recovering from treatment such as back and hip operations, who get physio support in the pool to improve their mobility
- the MS Therapy Support Group that hires weekly sessions in the pool, which says the pool enables social contact as well as exercise
- children who have disabilities.

On 7 December, we asked an open meeting of one of Reading's clinical commissioning groups - the group of GPs that hold the local NHS budget - whether they supported the closure of the pool and whether they could be sure that the impact on people with disabilities had been properly considered.

Berkshire West CCGs responded to Healthwatch Reading with a statement: "Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust have informed the CCGs of their proposal to close the hydrotherapy pool as part of the trust's Cost Improvement Schemes and the CCGs were notified at the same time as the public. We are in the discussions with the Trust of the impact of this."

The trust said on its website that the pool would close on 31 March 2017, because it was a costly service to run, it needed £50,000 worth of improvements to stay open, and it had 'very little proven benefit to patients'. Staff who worked in the pool would return to working on wards.

We will ask the CCGs for the outcome of their discussions with the trust so we can update the public.

Our feedback on a draft Reading Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Our other main activity this month was giving feedback to Reading Borough Council on a proposed Health and Wellbeing Strategy for 2017-2020 for our town. We have asked to see evidence on what the first, previous, strategy for 2013-16 had achieved. We also questioned

whether priorities had been chosen based on them being affordable, or what was most needed. Some voluntary organisations had, for example, queried why suicide prevention had not been included. The final version of the strategy is due to go to the January meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board, which is held in public.

HAVE YOUR SAY ON PLANNED CLOSURE OF DAY CENTRE FOR PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

Reading's main day centre for people with mental health needs is set to be closed in a move which Reading Borough Council (RBC) has blamed on central government funding cuts. People who use Reading Your Way, based in Rupert Square, are now being formally consulted on the proposals about what impact the closure would have on them and what support they would need to move to other services.

Reading Your Way offers a variety of support ranging from helping people make friends and find hobbies, support getting into work or education, plus housing, financial and health advice. If the closure goes ahead in 2017, people will be offered a different service called the Reading Recovery College, which was launched in September 2016. It offers a range of free courses at New Directions in South Reading or Central Library, on topics such as 'Mindfulness' and 'Understanding Medication'.

Councillor Graeme Hoskin, RBC's lead member for health and the council's Mental Health Champion, said: "Unfortunately, due to major government funding cuts, we cannot continue to support the existing service and must now look to how we can make the most of our limited resources, whilst maximising the benefit to users of the mental health services."

Reading Your Way is jointly funded by the NHS and Reading Borough Council. The council visited on 9 December to discuss the plans with service users and will re-visit on Monday 16 January 2017 from 11.30am-12.30pm.





People can also respond via an online survey at <https://consult.reading.gov.uk/css/copy-of-readingyourway/untill28February2017>.

READING WOMAN STARTS PETITION TO OPPOSE CLOSURE OF LOCAL CHILDREN'S CENTRES

A Reading woman has won support from more than 400 people so far for her online petition opposing a reduction in the number of the town's Children's Centres from 13 to 4.

Wendy Thomson's petition says: "It is unreasonable to suggest that 5,097 children age 0-4 years old from East and North Reading should attend one children's centre in Cemetery Junction." At least one of the two Children's Centres north of the river, should be saved, adds the petition, at <http://bit.ly/2hPDSZD>.

Reading Borough Council blamed cuts in central government funding for forcing it to make difficult decisions about front-line services.

The plans would save £400,000 and would mean the remaining four Children's Centres' 'hubs' would be based at: Sun Street Youth & Community Building, Southcote Youth & Community Building and Children's Centre, Ranikhet Children's Centre, and Whitley Youth Centre. These centres would offer parents and families three types of support:

- Midwife appointments and health visitor clinics to give ante- and post-natal care to all women and babies;
- Parenting courses and advice on benefits, housing, training and employment for families needing this support; and
- One-to-one sessions for people needing intensive support with children aged 0-3 years, such as teenage parents.

Three satellite venues would also provide some activities to support the hubs' work, at: Caversham Children's Centres & Nursery School on Amersham Road, Coley Children's Centre at St Mary and All Saints School, and a third one at either Battle Library or Civitas School.

A formal, 12-week consultation is expected to be launched early in the New Year.

The petition launched by Wendy Thomson will be sent to Councillor Jan Gavin, lead member for Children's Services and Families.

NEW FOCUS ON HOW TO MAKE DENTAL COMPLAINTS

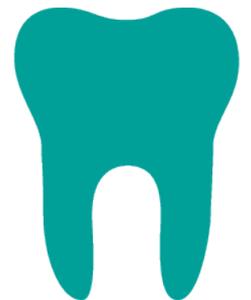
The public has been given clearer national advice on how to raise concerns or complaints about NHS or private dental treatment.

The move comes after Healthwatch Reading and other local Healthwatch around England escalated concerns about the difficulty some people face accessing dentists. In our case, a new refugee family who were fully entitled to receive NHS care, found it difficult to get urgent dental treatment due to paperwork issues.

In response, a 'statement on dental complaints' has been drawn up jointly by Healthwatch England, the General Dental Council (which decides if dentists are fit to practise), the Care Quality Commission (which inspects dental practices and other NHS and care services), NHS England (which holds contracts with dentists for their NHS work), and the Department of Health.

The statement urges people to ask dentists for copies of their complaints procedures and to try and resolve concerns informally and directly with the dental practice. If that doesn't work, people can contact their local NHS Complaints Advocacy service - which locally, is Healthwatch Reading. Or people can contact NHS England, or finally, the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman.

Healthwatch England's evidence is contained in a new report (*Access to NHS dental services - what people told local Healthwatch*). As well as refugees, some people who were homeless, who had disabilities, or who lived in care homes, also experienced problems.





LATEST QUALITY RATINGS FOR LOCAL SERVICES

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

London Street Surgery (Dr Essa & Dr Harrold), upgraded to 'Good', after a re-inspection. Improvements included carrying out a patient feedback survey, and completing staff DBS checks. Report published on 16 December 2016: http://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/new_reports/AAAF9717.pdf

Pembroke Lodge, rated 'Good'. The small residential home for older people, sited on Alexandra Road, is 'well-led' and keeps people safe. Report published 16 December 2016: http://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/new_reports/INS2-2682157564.pdf

Beacher Hall Care Home rated 'Good'. Based on the Bath Road, it cares for younger people with brain injuries and some older people. People felt like they really mattered to staff, and were treated with kindness. Report published on 2 December 2016: http://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/new_reports/INS2-2820217075.pdf

Moorlands Rest Home, rated 'Good', but 'requires improvement' on one of the five inspection themes, of keeping the service fully safe. People said they felt well cared for at this residential home on the Oxford Road, for up to 12 older people. Inspectors asked for improvements on cleaning, sterilising, fire evacuation plans and safety checks. Report published 29 November 2016: https://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/new_reports/INS2-2473628808.pdf

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.

The commission has powers to put under-performing organisations into 'special measures' or even close them.



UPCOMING EVENTS IN JANUARY

Wednesday 25 January 2017

Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust's board of directors meeting, held in public from 9.30am in the boardroom at Royal Berkshire Hospital. **The trust's council of governors meeting**, is also held in public, on the same day, at 6pm in the seminar room of the Trust education Centre <http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/open-meetings.htm>

Friday 27 January 2017

Reading Health and Wellbeing Board, meets in the Council Chamber in Civic Offices on Bridge Street in Central Reading, at 2pm. The board is made up of councillors, local NHS organisations, and Healthwatch Reading, and meets to discuss how services are working for local people.

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

