

news

Local news from your local Healthwatch

March 2016

Our team report for the past month

Our month started by visiting **Jean O’Callaghan**, chief executive of **Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust** on **3 February**, for the first of a series of regular six monthly meetings with local Healthwatch across West Berkshire. Healthwatch Reading brought up one of the main areas of concerns collected from patients recently - poor admin which has resulted in wrong appointments being given out, missing hospital letters or unanswered phone calls. Ms O’Callaghan explained that the recent reorganisation of admin teams carried out at the trust could have, in hindsight, been done better, and a plan was in place to tackle outstanding issues. Ms O’Callaghan frankly set out future challenges for the trust - including a £9m deficit and rising numbers of people attending the emergency department (which will probably mean it will miss the four-hour A&E waiting target for the last quarter of 2015-16). Cancer targets were also being affected by issues such as the national shortage of dermatologists, which made it difficult to quickly see suspected skin cancers. Ms O’Callaghan also told the meeting that she personally sees and signs off all trust responses to formal patient complaints.

On the **5 February** we gave a presentation to the **Older People’s Working Group at Reading Borough Council on the current state of GP services**. There was a lot of interest from the audience about the scale of changes ahead: smaller practices in Reading are merging with others; national inspectors are finding variable quality of practice; and the national shortage of GPs means many patients do not get to see the same doctor every time they go. Healthwatch Reading has nearly completed its series of visits to all GP practices and will be publishing a summary report in April or May.

A **Healthwatch Reading rep** has been attending a **local NHS end-of-life steering group**, which aims to make improvements to how care is delivered to people diagnosed as having 12 months or less to live. One of the ideas being explored is how to ensure that patients and families have access to timely support, 24/7, and how to increase the number of people being able to die in their preferred place, especially at home. Healthwatch Reading is hoping to collect views and experiences of people and relatives or carers - please contact us to speak in confidence if you wish to have your say.



Public invited to primary care committee meeting on 9 March

Members of the public are invited to attend the next meeting of the NHS committee that makes decisions about GP services across Berkshire West, including Reading.

The meeting of the Berkshire West Joint Primary Care Commissioning Committee (JPCCC) will take place on 9 March 2016, from 1pm to 4.30pm, at Reading Civic Offices in Bridge Street.

The agenda and papers for the meeting will be published five working days before the JPCCC meeting - visit the webpage <http://www.nwreadingccg.nhs.uk/joint-pccc>. People who want to attend and/or submit a question about an agenda item, should telephone 0118 982 2709, or email spiteam.berkshirewest@nhs.net.

Reading Lions Club offers free prostate cancer testing to men over 50

Local men aged over 50 are being invited to get a free prostate cancer test at an event organised by Reading Lions Club.

The tests will be offered on the evening of 10 March, from 4.30-9.30pm, at CircleReading hospital in Drake Way. Free parking is available at the Madjeski Stadium, from where a complimentary shuttle bus will run to the hospital. Trained phlebotomists will take blood from men for the prostate specific antigen (PSA) test and send it off to a lab. Each result will be reviewed by a retired consultant urologist, who will send results back to men graded, green, amber or red, including advice about any next steps such as going to see their own GP.

The Lions Club is funding the £20 cost of each test, or people can make a donation. Visit: www.readinglions.org.uk/communityservice/freeprostatecancerpsatestevent2015.html.

Online tool launched to map where to find good care homes near you

The Care Quality Commission - which inspects and rates quality of NHS and social care providers - has launched an online tool to help people find good care homes. The tool allows people to enter a postcode in the area they are searching for a care home and see by colour-coded dots, what standard of care homes are available locally.

CQC's Chief Inspector of Adult Social Care, Andrea Sutcliffe, said: "When people are considering a care home, either for themselves or a loved one, knowing about the quality of care being provided is a crucial part of the decision making process."



Healthwatch Reading's next open board meeting to be held on 15 March

Members of the public are invited to attend Healthwatch Reading's next open board meeting, on Tuesday 15 March. The meeting will be held from 6-7pm to encourage wider attendance from people who may normally be busy during the day and unable to attend.

The meeting will be held on 3rd floor, Reading Central Library and is accessible by wheelchair. The meeting is expected to agree Healthwatch Reading's 2016-17 workplan.

An agenda and papers will be published on Healthwatch Reading's website one week before the meeting, or phone 0118 937 2295 for further details.

National review calls for women to have more choice over maternity care

Women should have greater control over where they give birth and receive better continuity of care from the same professionals, according to findings of the National Maternity Review published in February.

The review's main recommendations, include:

- giving women a personal health budget to 'buy' their preferred maternity package, whether that is from a hospital, community team, or new practices set up by accredited independent midwives;
- allocating women a midwife from a team no larger than six midwives, who can provide continuity of care through pregnancy, birth and postnatally;
- giving women unbiased information about their options, including a digital maternity tool that includes access to their records;
- rapid access to specialist care if needed; and
- access to a rapid resolution and redress scheme where compensation could be offered to families without going to court, for errors that lead to, for example, severe brain damage of their baby.

The review, carried out by Baroness Julia Cumberlege, took evidence from women all over England, including reports sent in by local Healthwatch. Healthwatch Reading submitted its recent report on the experience of women who were diverted at the last minute from giving birth at their preferred place.

Baroness Cumberlege said: "Women have told us they want to be given genuine choices and have the same person looking after them throughout their care. We must ensure that all care is as safe as the best and we need to break down boundaries and work together to reduce the variation in the quality of services and provide a good experience for all women."



Council launches register of young people with extra needs

Families with extra needs are being urged to sign up to a Children and Young People's Disabilities Register to help Reading Borough Council build up a better picture of how much support and services are needed locally.

The register is a secure database holding information about children and young people aged 0-19 years with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Registering is voluntary and is not required to obtain any local services (but also does not guarantee entitlement to services). People do not have to have a diagnosis to register. The register can be found on the council's 'service's guide' - www.reading.gov.uk/servicesguide, which lists community and statutory organisations and support available to residents.

The council said the register would be used anonymously to show the use of and demand for services in Reading and help the council plan, monitor and develop services.

Families who register could also choose to receive a MAX card that offers discounts on attractions across the UK (see www.mymaxcard.co.uk).

Phone the Family Information Service on 01189 937 3777 (option 2), for more information.

General Osteopathy Council seeks people to join its patient panel

People are being sought to sit on a patient panel for the General Osteopathic Council.

Osteopathy treats muscle and joint problems such as back pain and practitioners must be registered by law with the General Osteopathic Council to practise. The Council is seeking people to join its Patient and Partnership Group to help develop patient information and help influence standards of practice. Group membership is a voluntary post but reasonable travel expenses and refreshments are covered.

To find out more, telephone Sarah Eldred, communications manager, on 020 7357 6655 (x245), or email: seldred@osteopathy.org.uk.

Home care agency 'requires improvement'

The home care agency, Allied Healthcare Reading, has been rated as 'requires improvement', by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Concerns included failure to collect full employment histories from recruits, and inaccuracies in client files.

