

TEAM REPORT

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We began February by attending the Reading Older People's Working Group, where a final consultation meeting was held by Reading Borough Council, about the future of our organisation.

To recap, the council had consulted on plans to make Healthwatch Reading and Healthwatch Wokingham work as one organisation, in order to save money. We were grateful for the many attendees at the various consultation meetings, who spoke about the importance of keeping Healthwatch local and the impact of our work. A council committee was due to make a decision on the proposals on 12 March, but this has now been postponed, because the council 'received a number of detailed responses' to the consultation, which will 'take some time to analyse fully', the council's website states.

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We continued to visit local care homes for our latest project.

We will start to publish interim findings soon and we will focus as much on the good things

we find, as much as any areas for improvement. Sometimes it's the little things that can make a big difference - such as the photos on the doors of residents' rooms we observed at one home, that really gave it a person-centred atmosphere.

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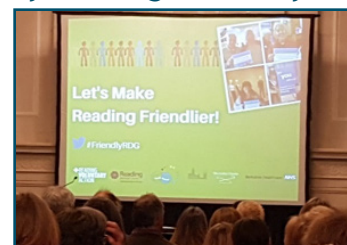
We attended a Reading conference jointly run by community and women's groups, and the NHS, about female genital mutilation (FGM). One of the key messages was about the need for better training for health professionals on harmful practices, cultural awareness, and the need to treat survivors with respect and dignity.

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We attended an event at which GPs, researchers and members of the public heard from Oxford GP and researcher Dr Kamal Mahtani on 'Why does it take so long to see a GP'. Dr Mahtani researches ways in which how GP surgeries are run can be improved.

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We were among a large crowd gathered at an event run by Reading Voluntary Action discussing and sharing ideas on their campaign to end loneliness and social isolation in Reading. Look out in your local library for pledge cards you can sign, to show, for example, you will regularly chat to a neighbour who might not have anyone else in their life.



HEALTHWATCH READING SEEKS VIEWS OF LGBT+ COMMUNITY

At the end of February, we launched a new survey seeking the views of people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

The idea for the survey sprung from a meeting we had with Jess and Kath from Support U, a local charity supporting people with LGBT+ issues, when we met them at a community event late last year. Together we have developed a set of

Support U
diversity matters

questions aiming to find out if people disclose their sexuality or gender identity to health or social care professionals, what impact this has on how they are treated, and whether they would suggest any improvements to services.

The survey is anonymous but we will share themes of the findings to raise awareness of people's experiences and any need for changes.

Please phone our office to request a paper copy.





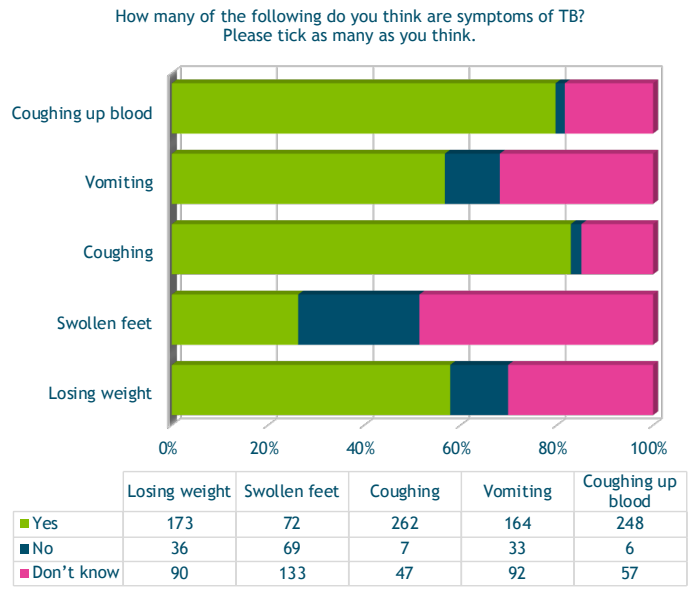
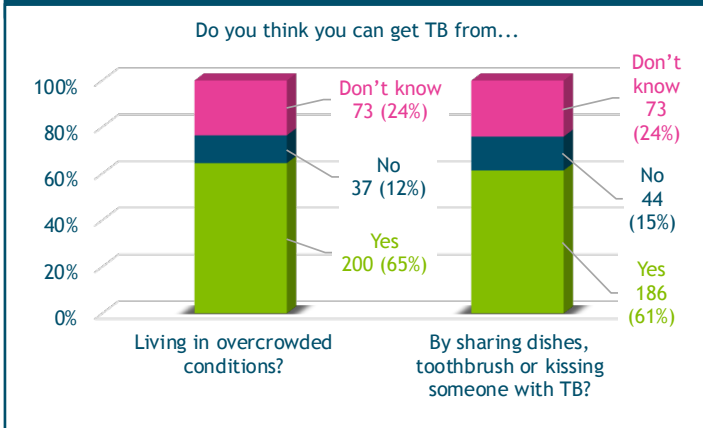
HEALTHWATCH READING SURVEY FINDINGS: WHAT READING PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT TUBERCULOSIS (TB)

We surveyed 326 people through a community outreach project to help Public Health and NHS officials understand local awareness. Reading has a very high rate of TB compared to other boroughs, and work is underway to try and persuade more at-risk people to get tested for ‘sleeping’ TB to help prevent them developing TB symptoms.

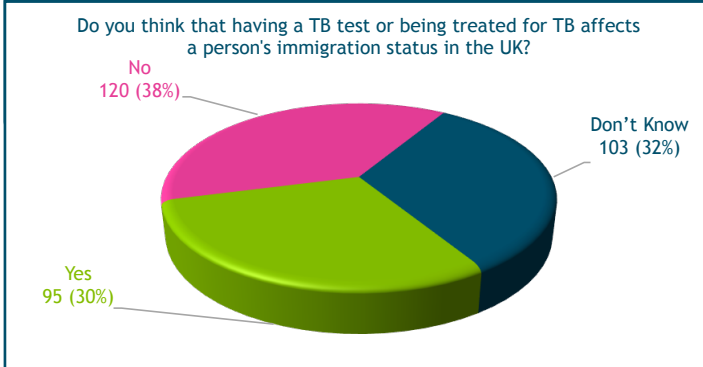
Here’s a highlight of our key findings. Our full report will be discussed by the Reading Health and Wellbeing Board on 16 March 2018.

The most well known symptoms of TB were coughing (83%), or coughing up blood (80%); the least known was swollen feet (26%).

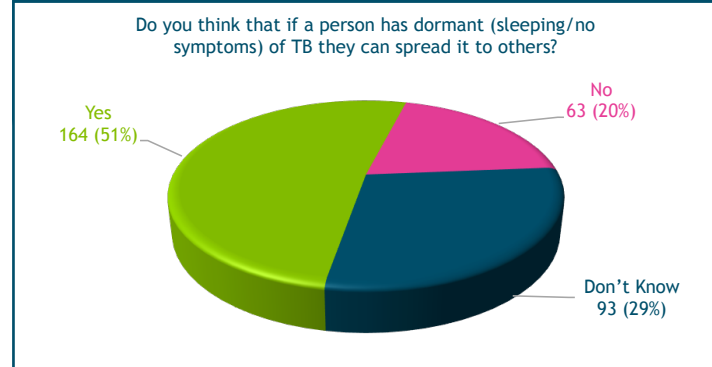
More than 60% knew rightly that living in crowded conditions is a risk factor for contracting TB. However 60% wrongly thought you could get TB by sharing toothbrushes with infected people, and nearly one-quarter were unsure.



Only 37% knew that being tested or treated for TB does not affect a person’s immigration status in the UK. 32% were unsure.



More than half (51%) mistakenly believed that people with latent (sleeping) TB could spread TB to others, 29% were unsure.





HAVE YOUR SAY ON NEW DRUG AND ALCOHOL PLANS

Reading people are being asked to have their say on the council's new drugs and alcohol strategy. 'The sheer size of alcohol misuse should make it a priority and so this is where we believe we should be targeting our work, whilst continuing to offer support and interventions for drugs misuse,' states Councillor Graeme Hoskin, the lead member for health at Reading Borough Council, in the strategy. Over the next five years, the aim is to give more people support to address risky, harmful and dependent alcohol use, and to reduce the number of alcohol-related hospital admissions. Young people will get more prevention information at schools, and drug deaths and suicides will be reduced.

However the strategy acknowledges that without extra funding, 're-balancing existing resources to address the unmet needs of alcohol users while managing the risks to the opiate using population will be a considerable challenge for Reading. Phone the council on 0118 937 3244 to ask for a hard copy. The consultation ends 23 April 2018.

The strategy states:

- at least 30,000 Reading people are drinking at potentially harmful levels, while 4,500 people have already harmed their health or wellbeing by drinking too much
- more Reading men die due to alcohol-related diseases (around 24 per 100,000 population) compared to the national average (around 16 per 100,000 people)
- around 10 people a year die in Reading from drug use, mostly from accidental overdoses of heroin, at a higher rate than the national average
- young people referred for help with drugs or alcohol have multiple problems in their life - 37% are also on a child protection plan or classed as a 'looked after child' or 'child in need', and 42% of these young people were being affected by somebody else's drug or alcohol misuse
- violent and sexual crime in Reading - which is often associated with drug or alcohol misuse - has risen since 2013

BERKSHIRE WEST INTEGRATED CARE SYSTEM ADVISED TO HEED HEALTHWATCH PRINCIPLES

The new NHS organisation overseeing the 'Berkshire health pound', will be expected to follow Healthwatch England principles on involving patients and the public.

'We expect them to involve and engage with patients and the public, their democratic representatives and other community partners,' states new NHS guidance published in February. 'Engagement plans should reflect the five principles for public engagement identified by Healthwatch,' it adds.

These five Healthwatch principles call for organisations to:

1. Set out the case for change so people understand the current situation and why things may need to be done differently.
2. Involve people from the start in coming up with potential solutions.
3. Understand who in your community will be

affected by your proposals and find out what they think.

4. Give people enough time to consider your plans and provide feedback.
5. Explain how you used people's feedback, the difference it made to the plans and how the impact of the changes will be monitored.

Healthwatch England is the national umbrella organisation for the 150-plus Healthwatch organisations working in every local authority area of England.

The Berkshire West Accountable Care System - as it was initially known - is one of 10 new organisations testing out closer working between hospitals, community services, GPs, and NHS funding groups, with the aim of improving their area's healthcare.

The NHS England guidance also states that accountable care systems will now be renamed as 'Integrated Care Systems'.





LATEST QUALITY RATINGS FOR LOCAL SERVICES

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



Multi-Care Reading care home rated 'good'.

The residents of this small care home are well cared for and are well known by the staff who help them to be as independent as possible. All the residents have a 'communications passport' that explains how the staff should interact with them, however the inspectors advised the home to make staff aware of the Accessible Information Standard, new legal guidance for health and care providers.

Report published 12 February 2018

Downshire House care home rated 'good' following an unannounced inspection. The CQC reported that it had received positive feedback about the home providing 'a warm, calm and caring environment' for residents, some

of whom had 'challenging issues'. However the care home has been told to improve its recruitment processes to ensure it gets full references for new staff.

Report published 15 February 2018

Reading Crossroads home care agency has been rated 'good' for the 'caring and kind' service it provides. The CQC stated that the agency tried to send the same care worker to help build up good relationships with those who needed help - in one case a relative said the same care worker had been coming for 10 years. The service was also able to provide emergency 24-hour support.

Report published 16 February 2018

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 MARCH

Friday 2 March 2018

Access & Disabilities Working Group, 2.30pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading RG1 2LU.

Wednesday 7 March 2018

South Reading CCG Governing Body Meeting in Public, 9:30am-12:30pm at The Museum of English Rural Life, Redlands Road, Reading RG1 5EX. For more information please call 0118 982 2706

Wednesday 14 March 2018

Healthwatch Reading Board Meeting in Public, 11.15am-12.15pm at Reading Central Library, 3rd Floor, Abbey Square, Reading RG1 3BQ. For more information call 0118 937 2295.

Wednesday 14 March 2018

Berkshire West Primary Care Commissioning Committee, 1.00pm-4.30pm, at the Oakwood Centre, Headley Road, Woodley RG5 4JZ. For more information call 0118 982 2706.

Friday 16 March 2018

Reading Health and Wellbeing Board, 2.00pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading RG1 2LU.

Tuesday 20 March 2018

North & West Reading CCG Governing Body Meeting in Public, 1.30pm - 4.30pm at NHS Offices, 57-59 Bath Road, Reading, RG30 2BA. For more information call 0118 982 2706.

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

