



OUR TEAM REPORT FOR THE PAST MONTH

Our last newsletter generated a lot of interest for the way we set out the public plans of Reading Borough Council to make a further £20m of spending cuts, including a planned closure of a mental health care home. Our report prompted a group of people with learning disabilities to have a special discussion, and we were also contacted by the media, who wanted to check whether they were part of old spending cuts already announced by the council or new budget savings. Unfortunately, it is the latter - the RBC council leader has described the plans as regrettable but has blamed central government.

Healthwatch Reading took the decision to list 10 of the planned major spending cuts in detail in our August newsletter, as part of our remit to inform local people, so they can play a full part in responding to the proposals. We know that many people are unable to attend council meetings where these decisions are made or may not know where to find full details of proposals on the council's website.

Here is how people with learning disabilities, supported by the charity Talkback, initially reacted to the proposed £585,000 cuts to spending on care for people with learning disabilities, which could mean people don't receive regular help from a support worker:



Photo from Talkback feedback report

"There are times when everyone needs to connect with someone - to sort something out or to speak to someone face to face. The truth is, the community is a lonely place and in some cases your neighbours are not interested in helping you out. Especially if it's a problem. Not everyone with a learning disability can use online or even own a computer."

And:

"One of the most important things about learning disabilities is getting to know what we can do and what we might need support with. That relationship with support workers is vital and if you are going to take it away you are going to cause more problems in the long term."

Healthwatch Reading has passed these comments to a senior official at the council, so they can understand and take into account how local people feel about the plans. Healthwatch Reading will give updates in future newsletters.





Our other main staff news to report, is that Healthwatch Reading has been appointed as regional representative on a national group that will meet monthly to share intelligence about patient involvement in Sustainability and Transformation Plans. STPs, as they are known for short, sound like just more NHS jargon, but it is important that we know what is going in them. They are being used as way of deciding large scale savings, efficiencies and transformation in the NHS. There have already been reports in the national press that STPs are being used to propose large scale hospital cuts in some areas.

The STP that will affect Reading people has been drawn up by a new NHS regional body called the Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire (BOB) footprint. All of England's 44 footprints had to submit initial STP plans to NHS England by 30 June 2016. None of the local Healthwatch within BOB were given full details of the STP plan before this date. This seems contrary to a lot of national guidance about how the public should be involved in shaping health services.

In late July, Healthwatch Reading attended, on behalf of other local Healthwatch within BOB, the first meeting of a national group arranged by Healthwatch England to discuss STPs. We learned that some local Healthwatch in other parts of England have been more involved in informing or reviewing STP plans, than in our region. Healthwatch England will pass on evidence of this variation in public involvement to senior NHS officials. We will update Reading people when the detail of our local STP plan is made public.

WHAT SHOULD YOU EXPECT FROM THE NHS WHEN IT COMES TO ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION?

People with disabilities, impairments or sensory loss are now entitled to get information from health and care services, in a way that works for them.

From 31 July 2016, all organisations providing NHS or adult social care - including GP practices and hospitals - have had to comply with the Accessible Information Standard.



The aim of the standard is to make sure that people get information that they can access and understand, such as in

large format or Braille. The standard also says people should be supported to communicate, for example, with the help of a British Sign Language interpreter.

An Easy Read guide to the new standard can be found at <http://bit.ly/2c1FCv3> Please let Healthwatch Reading know of any local experiences on this issue.

FIVE THINGS YOU SHOULD EXPECT:

1. You should be asked if you have any communication needs, and asked how these needs can be met
2. Your communication needs should be recorded in a clear and set way
3. Your notes should highlight these communication needs so people are aware and know how to meet them
4. Information about your needs should be shared, with your consent, with other providers of NHS or adult social care
5. Information should be delivered to you in a way you can access and understand, with the option for communication support if needed





WOULD YOU BE HAPPY TO HAVE YOUR PATIENT DATA SHARED?

The public has until 7 September 2016 to have their say on how patient data should be handled.

People can fill in an online survey (at <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/8MQCR8D>) that Healthwatch England has set up to ensure people's views are heard.

The survey asks people their opinions about new standards proposed by Dame Fiona Caldicott, the National Data Guardian for Health and Care. The standards include:

A new opt-out for those who do not want their information shared

Dame Fiona recommends a new opt-out for people who do not want their confidential information to be used for purposes other than their direct care. Whether people opt out or not, they should be reassured that their health and care information will only ever be used if the law allows and never for marketing or insurance purposes, unless they separately consent to this.

A more extensive dialogue with the public

There should be more conversations with the public about how their information is used.

They should be made aware of the benefits of information sharing such as researchers making breakthroughs in life-saving medicines through to regulators spotting quickly when things go wrong.



Ten new data security standards to apply to all organisations which hold health or care information.

Leaders of health and social care organisations should demonstrate clear accountability and responsibility for data security, just as they do for clinical and financial management and accountability.

Dame Fiona's recommendations are set out in full in the report *Review of Data Security, Consent and Opt-out*, which can be found online at <http://bit.ly/29x0T10>.

PATIENT CHOICE SET TO IMPROVE AS PRIVATE CLINICS GET RATED

Private clinics that offer cosmetic surgery, laser eye surgery, or termination of pregnancy, could be publicly rated for the first time under plans proposed by the Department of Health (DH).

The DH want to put seven different types of services under greater scrutiny, to help people compare the quality of care they are choosing, in the same way that they can now look up ratings on various GPs, hospitals or care homes. Ratings would be given by the Care Quality Commission, the organisation that checks quality and can shut failing services.

The proposed seven services are:

1. cosmetic surgery providers
2. independent community health service providers
3. independent ambulance services
4. independent dialysis units
5. refractive eye surgery providers
6. substance misuse centres
7. termination of pregnancy services

The public has until 14 October 2016 to give feedback on the DH plans via its website at <http://bit.ly/2borCue>.





LATEST QUALITY RATINGS FOR LOCAL SERVICES

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

Kingwood - White Barn care home rated 'Good'

The people at Kingwood receive good quality care and are treated with respect and kindness and are encouraged to lead a fulfilled life. The full CQC report is at: <http://bit.ly/2bxKw6e>

Tilehurst Lodge care home rated as 'Requires Improvement'

This rating followed a re-inspection to check up on concerns found in 2015. While some big changes had been made, the CQC needed more proof of consistent care over a period of time. See <http://bit.ly/2c5oNhs>.

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 SEPTEMBER

Wednesday 7th

South Reading Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) governing body meeting in public 9.30am - 11.45am, followed by its annual general meeting 12pm-1.3-0pm, at Museum of English Rural Life, Redlands Road, Reading RG1 5EX. Telephone 0118 982 2709 or email ppiteam.berkshire@nhs.net

Friday 9th

Older People's Working Group, 2pm-4pm, in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Bridge Street, RG1 2LU. The agenda includes a talk about the new day centre at Rivermead. Telephone 0118 937 2383 or email OPWG@reading.gov.uk

Tuesday 20th

North & West Reading Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), governing body meeting in public, 1:30pm - 4:30pm, 59 Bath Road, Reading RG30 2BA. Telephone 0118 982 2709 or email ppiteam.berkshire@nhs.net

Wednesday 28th

Royal Berkshire Hospital board of directors meeting in public from 11.00am, Royal Berkshire Hospital, Craven Road, Reading RG1. Telephone 0118 322 5364 or visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/open-meetings.htm

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

