



NHS
Sunderland
Clinical Commissioning Group

Mr Alan Patchett
Chair Healthwatch Sunderland,
Stanfield Business Centre,
Addison Street,
Sunderland,
Tyne and Wear,
SR2 8SZ

Pemberton House
Colima Avenue
Sunderland
SR5 3XB

Tel: (0191) 512 8484
www.sunderlandccg.nhs.uk

03/07/2017

Re: Healthwatch Sunderland report on mental health services

Dear Alan Patchett,

Thank you for providing the opportunity to respond to the recent report on Mental Health Services in Sunderland. The CCG is always keen to hear what matters most to our local people regarding our mental health services across Sunderland. We decided that the best way to provide you with a response was to take the report through our Sunderland Mental health Partnership Board (MHPB). The MHPB acknowledged that the majority of people that took part in your consultation voted for 'mental health provision in Sunderland' as the number one priority.

The CCG worked in collaboration with NTW service staff, users/carers and other partners to deliver an ambitious and comprehensive MH transformation programme over many years in Sunderland. This has resulted in massive changes to service provision, which have been acknowledged locally and nationally as substantial improvements.

The MHPB felt it is important to firstly acknowledge the effort on the part of Healthwatch to prioritise and investigate mental health. We appreciate the positive comments from service users contained within your report and would like to continue to build on these. In addition there are a number of critical comments which we feel can be helpful.

The MHPB was particularly struck by the high percentages of service users, workers and carers identifying social stigma as a barrier to accessing services. We are keen to ensure that all our services continue to play a role in challenging the stigma associated with mental ill health. We are open to suggestions on how to further reduce stigma towards mental illness, and to raise awareness to mental health in the general population of Sunderland. We feel this may greatly contribute to achieving better mental health in our city and to the effectiveness of our services in supporting those with mental health needs.

With regards to accessibility, this includes factors such as ease and clarity of access procedures, geographic spread of services, responsiveness to patient choice, self-referral options, telephone response times, waiting times for specific services and clinicians, etc. These issues have been a central focus in the collaborative service transformation process mentioned earlier, which has amongst other improvements led to improved pathways as well to significant reductions in waiting times, with waiting times in many parts of our services now being amongst the best in England.

Keeping GP's up to date and raising awareness on mental health issues and pathways are key priorities for the CCG and is represented with various initiatives in the Mental Health Network Action Plan.

Improving access can lead to an increasing demand on clinical capacity. Ultimately the challenge remains to achieve best possible results within the existing resources. We are presently working with NTW on ways to improve telephone access.

It is importance to make the distinction between Workers and Carers. Family/Unpaid Carers face very different challenges and this could have been acknowledged in the report.

Further comments and suggestions to improve accessibility are always welcome.

General comments and feedback received from MHPB:

Recommendation 1:

"CCG, Washington Mind and Healthwatch Sunderland to further promote and raise awareness of the wellbeinginfo.org website by targeting available mechanisms such as Time in Time Out (TITO) CCG training which is available to GPs and practice staff."

Sunderland CCG and Partners are always looking at ways to promote the wellbeing guide, in doing so we receive regular updates from Washington MIND at our Mental Health Programme Board.

Washington MIND report that there are high numbers of visitors to Wellbeing guide; they report that 55,398 unique visitors have accessed this site. This would suggest that the guide is being widely used throughout the area.

GPs are regularly kept up to date and regularly targeted, the guide is advertised in the local community, there are cards in all GP surgeries across Sunderland and this is also accessible via their practice systems.

There is regular promotion with GPs via TITO events and via the Mental Health Network however we will use this opportunity to revisit the means to further promote and communicate.

Recommendation 2:

"CCG and Healthwatch Sunderland to further promote the available self-referral pathways into support services for mental health."

All of our commissioned MH services have self-referral access which are continually improving and monitored by the CCG on a monthly basis. The report suggests the poster has improved self-referrals without any discussion with services to see if this is the case.

We feel that in the report there was no reference to the secondary care mental health single point of access which has significantly improved access and self-referral rates, also our 3rd sector providers, all of which have self-referral access to their services. We appreciate that there is always room for improvement in this important area and will ensure that providers are continuing to advertise their self-referral option.

It has been highlighted that the information on poster is incorrect regarding age ranges and some services were not aware poster was in circulation

Recommendation 3:

"Sunderland Voluntary and Community Sector should have representation on strategic boards such as the Health & Wellbeing board."

This is in place as there are various groups that have Voluntary Care Service (VCS) representatives in attendance. In terms of Health and Wellbeing Board (HWBB) the VCS sits on all the advisory boards to HWBB. Healthwatch is the statutory representative on HWBB

Recommendation 4:

“NTW / NHS need to consider how to improve the delivery of a consistent service.”

The CCG worked in collaboration with NTW service users/carers and partners to deliver an ambitious and comprehensive MH transformation programme over many years. The MHPB appreciate that service consistency is a very important area for service users and their families in order for them to build trusting relationships with the professionals involved in delivering their care and treatment and to achieve the best possible results across the Sunderland population.

As part of the transformational process, great effort was put into designing pathways that meet service user need, are accessible, patient friendly and that have smooth transitions which are not hindered by inclusion and exclusion due to organisational boundaries. Patient representatives were an integral part of this.

We recognised that when introducing service programmes such as this, consistency of service delivery can be affected. To allow a smooth transition from the current model to the new model an extensive planning process took place. This was to minimise the impact of for e.g. the remobilisation of staffing, new systems and processes etc. The model is now embedding and the CCG continue to monitor the impact in how NTW deliver their services and improve consistency.

We ensure consistency in service by regular contracting meetings, relationships with key managers to ensure that staff consistency is crucial, as these impacts on our patient's recovery and journey and these remains on our agendas to keep under review.

Yours sincerely



Michelle Turnbull

Senior Joint Commissioning Manager (MH/LD)

NHS Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group
Pemberton House
Colima Avenue
Sunderland
SR5 3XB