

## **Healthwatch Kingston**

### **Chair's Report to Board Meeting 24.01.2018**

#### **Personal Introduction**

As I write this report I am (hopefully) recovering from a bout of something that has caused me to be laid low with a bad cough for over a week. I have a doctor's appointment on Monday morning (Jan 22<sup>nd</sup>) a week after I made it and this was the first date I could get. I rang twice to enquire about cancellations as my breathing felt it was being impacted adversely, but to no avail. I discussed with the receptionist what I should do, suggesting a trip to A and E, but she advised that a number of emergency appointments are always held back at the surgery. I was left pondering if I qualified for one. In the end I seemed to start a mending process, so did not need to access one of these precious slots.

I retell this story not to elicit any sympathy nor to moan and groan about a service that is very much under strain from flu cases in mid-January this year, but really to describe what many thousands must be experiencing as they seek the advice of pharmacists to obtain symptomatic relief whilst being anxious that nothing more serious is wrong, and not wanting to put extra pressure on services, as inevitably there will be those in a worse place who need them more. I'm sure that primary care can do better though.

#### **Monitoring and Scrutiny**

As the local consumer champion, HWK, along with all other Healthwatches, has a number of key powers and responsibilities bestowed on it by legislation. These powers are significant and it is important to note here how we have invoked our particular power to refer a matter to the Health Scrutiny Committee of the Council for their consideration. Previous board meetings have learnt about the unacceptable delay in getting a satisfactory answer from the CCG about arrangements for commissioning Personality Disorder Services in Kingston when our partner boroughs have seemingly been able to do so and have good links with SWL St George's as the local provider.

We followed the necessary process with care and on December 7th 2017 at the Scrutiny Committee we made our case for getting a clear answer from the CCG about their intentions in this area of Mental Health practice. Elected members supported us and a report is now required to be presented at the next meeting of the Committee in March 2018. This represents some progress, we hope, for local services users and further demonstrates HWK's capacity for influencing local policy and practice.

We have also been active in two other areas. Firstly, we have made strong written representations to the Chief Executive of Kingston Hospital about the introduction of parking charges for blue badge holders, a proposal that has generated much adverse local publicity on account of the hardship that this may cause. We await the outcome of this communication.

Secondly, we have also written to the CCG to seek clarification of current and planned commissioning intentions relating to the closure of beds at Kingston Hospital. By having a presence at a number of key forums, HWK remains critically alert to any potential statement variations that are detected. This is not about trying to catch out organisations or individual officers and in some

cases HWK may well appreciate and support the reasons behind developments, but it is an important task for HWK to ensure that the public is well and accurately informed. We have received a reply from the CCG and we will study this at our next board meeting on January 24<sup>th</sup>.

These are the most recent examples of HWK adopting a challenging role but within the context of aiming to support and work with our local NHS.

### **Future priorities**

In the first quarter of this new year, HWK will continue to be actively involved in the following areas:

- Being involved with the Local Transformation Board to plan the changes required in Kingston to enhance primary care and the preventive agenda, whilst not losing acute capacity when its required
- Monitoring the delivery of the Mental Health Strategy and in particular scrutinising progress towards a better quality PD service
- Planning for and contributing to the Health Scrutiny Committee work plan
- Contributing to a debate about the future of the Health and Wellbeing Board as the strategic leader for health and social care in Kingston
- Scrutiny of budget decisions to assess consumer impact
- Developing affiliate and intelligence led inquiries into areas of service that are not seen by the public to be performing well.

Internally, we will be reviewing our performance in the current year and developing our priorities and strategic direction for the year ahead.

As ever my thanks to fellow board members and the team for their significant contributions to making HWK the successful organisation it is.

Grahame Snelling

Chair Kingston Healthwatch

20.1.18