

Portsmouth CCG public consultation: the future of services at Guildhall Walk **A response from Healthwatch Portsmouth**

Healthwatch Portsmouth is an independent statutory body that gathers the views and experiences of local people, enabling them to have a chance to speak up about health and social care services in their area. We collect local evidence-based information through community engagement to ensure that the people who plan, commission and check services listen to the people who use those services.

Portsmouth Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has proposed the relocation of the Guildhall Walk 'Walk-In' Treatment Centre (GWTC), located in the City Centre, to transfer 'walk-in' services provided at GWTC to the St Mary's 'Walk-In' Treatment Centre (SMTC) already located at St Mary's Hospital, Portsmouth. The CCG is also proposing the closure of the GP services at Guildhall Walk and transferring patients to a new venue and practice or to existing GP practices in the city, to be confirmed.

The feedback contained in this document is based on the information received by Healthwatch Portsmouth from local people and volunteers about the proposals.

1. The CCG's preferred option is to relocate the 'walk-in' service from Guildhall Walk to create a combined, enhanced walk-in centre at St Mary's Hospital. What do you think are the potential *benefits* of such a proposal?

Healthwatch Portsmouth understands the desire of the CCG to integrate health services with a view to making these more effective and achieve better value for money. However, in this instance, Healthwatch Portsmouth has not collected views of the public on potential benefits of these specific proposals, so is not able to comment at this time.

2. The CCG's preferred option is to relocate the 'walk-in' service from Guildhall Walk to create a combined, enhanced walk-in centre at St Mary's Hospital. What do you think are the potential *disadvantages* of such a proposal?

Healthwatch Portsmouth has expressed concerns over the level of engagement with the public and in turn their understanding of the proposals. During our independent consultation of the public in August 2015, two-thirds of respondents stated they were not aware of the proposals to relocate GWTC services to SMTC.

Feedback also confirmed low levels of support for the proposals with a clear majority of people who responded to the survey (5-to-1) being opposed to the proposed re-location, with fewer than 14% supporting the proposal and 19% having no preference. Of those who did not want the proposed move to take place, 48% felt 'very strongly' or 'strongly' about this, with key concerns focusing on accessibility, choice of services and waiting times, followed by impact on quality of services.

Healthwatch Portsmouth is concerned that poor public support for the proposals and low awareness of the changes being proposed may lead to a lack of buy-in by the local people and prevent the CCG achieving its objectives through the relocation. This may in turn lead

residents to not accessing medical services at all or accessing services inappropriately (such as attending A&E department at QA Hospital for more minor concerns).

3. What do you think are the most important factors for the CCG to consider when deciding whether to create a single, combined walk-in service at St Mary's Treatment Centre?

Members of the public confirmed a number of factors to us which they see as very important as part of this consultation. These centre on:

- a) **Capacity** – 22% of those surveyed were concerned SMTC might not be able to cope with the extra demand arising from combining two services into one on the St Mary's site. The capacity of a single facility to respond to current and future demand (in the face of changing demographics along with increasing housing developments and student accommodation in the City Centre) may lead to increased waiting times at SMTC. Concerns also exist about the quality and range of services that would need to be provided in the re-vamped facility, including crisis and mental health services.
- b) **Access** – 21% confirmed travel and accessibility as an issue, with 23% stating they would need to rely on the public transport network, 15% on taxis and 15% would have to walk to the SMTC. This raises issues around affordability, safety (eg: walking at night or in poor weather) along with practicalities of families with young children and residents with mobility issues. Concerns and doubts also exist over the adequacy of car parking facilities at St Mary's, adding to concerns about accessibility and affordability.
- c) **Choice** – 21% were concerned over the choice of options for healthcare being reduced with two sites being combined at one location.
- d) **Waiting times** – 15% raised concerns over an increase in waiting times.

In addition to this, there is a question over access to pharmacy services, with seemingly no pharmacy in close proximity to SMTC, as compared with the pharmacy currently operating next door to the GWTC.

In terms of the type of services residents would like at SMTC should the proposed move go ahead, the responses were:

- 47% same services as GWTC
- 29% walk-in GP
- 8% pharmacy
- 7% minor injuries
- 6% X-ray
- 3% test results obtainable same day

4. Are there any *other* factors, not addressed in the consultation document, which you think must be considered by the CCG before any decision is made?

Healthwatch Portsmouth made a number of recommendations to the CCG from its research into public awareness and impact during August 2015. We are pleased the CCG is undertaking formal public engagement to assess views about these proposals and have

sought to engage with different sections of the community with different awareness levels and communication needs.

With specific reference to the proposals to transfer the GP list of patients to other GPs in the city and/or a newly formed GP service, Healthwatch Portsmouth would need to be reassured about the process to suitably engage with patients about this to confirm:

- a) Their options for choosing another GP
- b) The process for moving to another GP
- c) What would be required from patients as part of this transfer
- d) What service they can expect from their new GP practice
- e) How patients will be reassured that new GPs will understand their individual medical needs
- f) What patients can do if they are not satisfied with the GP practices available to them to transfer to.

However, more generally, Healthwatch Portsmouth still believes there are questions outstanding that need a response from the CCG to reassure the public their views have been taken on board and have influenced the proposals and that the impact of any decision has been carefully thought through and risk of impact minimised. These questions centre on:

- a) Capacity of the SMTC:
 - i. What data does the CCG have to confirm the facilities and staffing provision at SMTC will be able to provide a quality service to an increased number of patients from across the city if services are transferred from GWTC?
- b) Access to the SMTC site:
 - i. Parking - are there confirmed plans in place to ensure parking provision will meet expected demand and is there a timetable for improvements to take place.
 - ii. Local transport – what agreement is in place for bus routes to be more flexible and tailored to the needs of those living near to GWTC to enable them to access SMTC throughout all opening hours?
- c) Other data sources:
 - i. What feedback has the CCG collected from particular groups (such as BME communities, disability, student, mental health, young people, older people, carers etc) in Portsmouth and how have these responses been taken account of in determining the outcome of this consultation and any subsequent implementation plans?
- d) Increasing awareness to help residents make right choice of service:
 - i. What does the CCG plan to do to minimise the risk of residents choosing, for example, the A&E department for a more minor concern instead of trusting the SMTC to support them with this if they have not used SMTC before?
 - ii. What steps have the CCG taken to consult with other service providers, such as the emergency services, to ensure they are aware of the changes and have capacity should there be levels of increased demand as people get used to there being no service at GWTC?
- e) Timetable:

- i. What is the proposed timetable for transfer of services out of GWTC if the decision is taken to go ahead with the proposed put forward in the consultation document?
- f) Impact of the changes:
 - i. How will the CCG review the impact of the transfer of services should they go ahead, what parties will they involve and what is the timetable for this?

The comments in this document confirm the issues highlighted to Healthwatch Portsmouth by members of the public and its volunteers. Whilst Healthwatch Portsmouth recognises the CCG is trying to integrate and make services more effective and efficient, there are many questions that need clarifying to ensure all views are considered, have an opportunity to influence the outcome of this consultation and ensure any decision taken is done so with the aspirations and needs of the local population in mind.

If the CCG or members of the public would like more information about any of the detail contained in this document, they are welcome to contact the Healthwatch Portsmouth Team on info@healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk or on **02393 977 079**.