

Healthwatch Sutton

Improving Healthcare Together – Discussion Group with Sutton Carers.

1) Introduction

Healthwatch Sutton engaged with the following groups of Carers:

- A group of 6 younger carers (aged 11 - 17). Four participants were female and two male, all White British and one participant had a long-term disability themselves. Location: Sutton Carers Centre, Benhill house, 12-14 Benhill Ave, Sutton SM1 4DA - 28/9/18, 4pm - 4.45pm.
- A group of 9 older carers (aged 39 - 86) . Four participants were female, four were male and one preferred not to say. Six had long-term disabilities and the group comprised five White British participants, three Asian British and one Caribbean participant. Location: Sutton Carers Forum, St Nicholas Way, Sutton SM1 1EA - 12/9/18, 1pm – 2pm.

2) Priorities / Main Criteria for ‘Good Healthcare’

When asking what good care ‘looks like’, some of the main points were: Proper diagnosis and appropriate medication; short waiting lists; good communication; empathy, support and good advice; close to home; well-trained staff; having a chance to have your say and feeling listened to; enough beds; appropriate staffing levels; right equipment; disabled waiting area; easily accessible/good transport; emergency cases given priority; clean hospital.

“Listening to the people who need help. The doctor kept giving my Mum the same treatment when she told them it didn’t work. Good communication is important”.

3) What Needs Improving Most?

The main points were being listened to, waiting lists (too long) and communications.

4) The Principle of Integrated and Site-Focussed Acute Services (prefaced by overview of safety / modernity / funding issue)

As found with other participants in this project, carers understood the case for change. Additionally, the clinical vision generally aligned with their own views. However, they urged that any change not restrict their access to services any further.

At this stage, any potential change is not really seen as a ‘step’ to the better healthcare vision they had discussed earlier.

5) Potential Solutions – Acute Services focussed at Epsom, St Helier or Sutton Hospitals

Carers' worries echoed participants elsewhere. Any changes must not make their experiences more inconvenient – easy transport access to services had to remain, and they were keen to ensure no one community was disadvantaged. There had to be equal geographical coverage.

There were also concerns at the cost of reconfiguring services and the ensuing disruption: as commonly feared with big projects, would the process become 'bogged-down' – would it go over-budget and end up being subject to political wrangling? Generally, there was not much confidence that even if one plan was agreed, it would be successfully implemented.

Epsom Hospital

The carers felt that it would take them longer to get to Epsom, and it would cost them more for them and their families, in time and money.

Epsom is outside my Oyster card Zone and would take too long to get to. This would affect my studies too."

However, Epsom was perceived as better-equipped than Sutton Hospital, had more specialists and had a better quality of care.

St Helier

St Helier was most carers' local hospital, and so was an easier choice over the other schemes; any improvements would be close-by. It has good transport links, so if something happened it was easily and quickly accessible. It was familiar to carers and perceived to have good quality staff and ambulance services. However, participants recognised the building was tired and in need of improvement, so change was needed. Parking was also seen as an issue.

Sutton Hospital

Generally, people thought it was a small hospital and associated (as often by other groups) with 'blood tests'. There was a lack of knowledge about this hospital. Some people felt that it was not central whereas others felt it had good transport links (train and bus nearby). Lack of parking facilities were noted by some.

Which one solution / site is preferred? Why?

Although seen as needing improving, St Helier was the preferred option as it was the closest to participants and therefore offered the most familiar and accessible service.

David Craig & John Leaman - 10th October 2018