

Healthwatch Sutton

Improving Healthcare Together – Discussion Group with Older People in Sutton.

1) Introduction

Healthwatch Sutton engaged with the following groups of older people:

- Sutton South Hello, Sutton. A group session of 32 older people (aged 53 - 90). 26 participants were female and 6 male. 20 were White British, 7 Indian, 1 Asian British, 1 Other White, 1 Other Asian and 2 preferred not to say. 16 had a long-term disability themselves, 13 did not and 3 preferred not to say. Location: Christchurch Hall, Christchurch Park, Sutton SM2 5TN, 12/9/18, 3pm – 4pm.

2) Priorities / Main Criteria for ‘Good Healthcare’

The familiar list of issues here reflects the older age group of respondents – so the emphasis is on convenience and comfort (short waiting times for appointments, for ambulances, and for being seen on arrival at A&E; multiple appointments should be co-ordinated at the same place on the same day; easy access by public transport and car; easy and cheap parking - and good food). The physical appearance and cleanliness of hospitals is noted. St Helier is ‘not in a good state of repair’, and memories linger of its MRSA problems – as they did among older people in the Epsom research. People also want well-trained and more staff (one person urged a recruitment drive into medicine among school-leavers). There was even a rare mention of NHS finances.

“The long-term financial overspend is not ultimately sustainable”

“[Good healthcare is] that I feel confident that assistance is available when needed at a convenient distance”

3) What Needs Improving Most?

This group focusses on staffing levels, which intertwine with the speed of being seen and the quality of care. As noted, St Helier is criticised for its condition – though improvement and modernisation work are acknowledged. The ever-present desire for ‘joined-up’ healthcare centres around being able to have multiple appointments at the same hospital on the same day – ‘to help complete them with less stress and time’

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

“Any A&E hospital is better than a non-A&E hospital”

“A&E must be large and appended to a large, well-staffed hospital”

There are few advocates for the proposed amalgamation of acute services – though again the

focus is mainly on A&E, so misperception is an issue.

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

Both Epsom and St Helier garner good and poor reviews. Word-of-mouth plays an important role, and location is perhaps slightly less the *sole* factor in determining people's preference.

Epsom Hospital

Though not the primary hospital for this group, it does have a good reputation for care quality and, specifically, for its knee and hip replacements. The small A&E counts against it – but few people are expressly critical of the whole hospital. Insofar as it is judged on location, opinions are mixed on the local bus services' convenience).

“I have limited experience [of Epsom], but it seems clean and better organised than St Helier”

“My daughter has had excellent care there”

“It's too far for me to get there: two buses”

St Helier

While not winning any beauty prizes, St Helier reportedly has a lot to recommend it. It has a large and efficient A&E, the staff are well-regarded (albeit in short supply), cleanliness is much-improved, the restaurant / canteen is liked, and there is a general impression that the place functions a lot better than it looks.

“The staff are very caring; nothing is too much trouble, and I'm always seen on time”

“It has established A&E, Maternity and Paediatric services”

“I am happy with the service all the time”

Sutton Hospital

Once again the also-ran in people's minds, little is known about Sutton. It has relatively few services and is regarded almost as a transit camp for those being referred on to St Helier.

“Once you go to Sutton you get sent to St Helier. It's an inconvenience. Why consider Sutton Hospital for the future?”
