

PROJECT SUMMARY

HEALTHWATCH KENT : Access to health & social care services by Eastern European Migrants in Thanet

This is a short summary of Healthwatch Kent's project to explore how the Eastern European community access health & social care services in Thanet. A copy of the full report can be found on our website www.healthwatchkent.co.uk

Background

Healthwatch Kent has become concerned about how the Eastern European community accesses services so it has conducted a project to explore the issues and gather experiences from people. We have made a number of recommendations to improve access.

What we found

- Access to health and social care remains inconsistent for Eastern European migrants in Thanet
- Many people expressed their concern at the complexity of registering for healthcare and the difficulties they faced in accessing provision and communicating their health concerns.
- Huge range of issues with translation services. Interpreters within GPs were not widely available with family members, often children, acting as interpreters
- Trust and communication is key to breaking down the many barriers
- Patients are more likely to attend A&E due to issues accessing and understanding GP services

Our recommendations include

- Better resources for professionals about the issues relating to the migrant population such as myth busters about migration
- Communication aids for reception staff
- Translated materials which are culturally appropriate for patients on a wide range of topics
- The current translation service needs to be improved. Staff also need to know how best to work with translators
- Doubling appointment times with the GP when interpreters are needed
- Community partnerships are needed to bridge communication and trust issues
- Better joint working between organisations and voluntary groups to maximise knowledge and impact
- Providers and commissioners need better information about the migrant population and their needs

Next Steps. We have shared our full report with relevant Commissioners and NHS England who have reassured us that they are taking our findings into account when making commissioning decisions. A translated copy of the report will also be available to everyone who took part.