

Focus on Neurological services



An overview of issues raised by people about neurological services in East Kent

Earlier this year we brought together 26 patients, professionals and carers to talk about peoples' experiences and discuss how they could be improved.

This month six people came back together to discuss what progress had been made and what else could be done.

What has happened since the last meeting?

Information

- We heard that patients weren't being told about the support that is available to them through voluntary organisations
- We've been working with East Kent Hospitals to explore whether voluntary organisations could have a presence in Outpatient clinics to provide information directly to patients where space permits
- East Kent Hospitals are keen for this to happen and are working to make it happen
- They have pledged to increase the range of information leaflets that are available to support patients
- We heard again that patients can be discharged from hospital with very little information about their neurological condition

Products

- At the last meeting we heard from patients who would like the opportunity to be involved in decisions about product changes such as continence products
- The Community Health Trust has a continence group which involves patients, so we have linked the interested patient with this group

Postcode lottery

- We heard from attendees that they felt services differed across Kent
- We shared the feedback with the people who commission services in East Kent. They are appointing a lead for neurological services in East Kent and we will meet them as soon as they are in post.

Wheelchairs

- Last time we heard strongly from patients and professionals about the long delays for wheelchairs and repairs to wheelchairs
- Healthwatch supported the Kent Physical Disability Forum to raise our collective concerns about the wheelchair service to the Kent Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee which is the highest level within Kent. This has resulted in a lot of activity and service users are now directly involved in improving this service.

What else did we hear?

In addition to discussing progress since the last meeting, we also heard about some new issues:

- Attendees felt unclear if services associated with stroke, such as neurology, were going to be changed as a result of the recent review and reconfiguration of stroke services
- People told us that patients are not always aware if they can self-refer themselves into community services or ask for their support to be reviewed
- People told us that neurological services can feel disjointed and inconsistent due to staff changes and temporary staff. Patients reported not being followed up as they should

Next Steps

- Healthwatch will raise the need for a strategic overview for neurological services with both East Kent Hospitals and their commissioner
- Healthwatch will seek clarity about the patient pathway from commissioners
- Healthwatch will get an update on plans for a central database for services to improve information for patients
- Healthwatch to talk to the Community Health Trust to understand how they refer patients to voluntary services such as Headway
- We agreed to get back together in March 2019
- Attendees requested the creation of patient forums for neurology and rehabilitation. Healthwatch to continue conversations with the hospitals and commissioners about the benefits of these forums

Thank you to everyone who attended.

#ItStartsWithYou

Together we can make a difference

If you are a patient, carer or professional and would like to get involved let us know on:

info@healthwatchkent.co.uk