

Patient Transport Service Briefing

Healthwatch West Sussex has been proactively involved in ensuring consumer experience is considered throughout the procurement and implementation of the current non-emergency patient transport service within Sussex. Since the start of the new service this month, the Healthwatch team has been monitoring patient feedback and collecting evidence.

Summary

- PTS Programme lead provided update last year that their engagement with Healthwatch West Sussex helped shape the service specification and had led to much **greater understanding of the requirements** for a patient transport service
- Healthwatch held pre-implementation discussions about changes to the eligibility for renal patients and received **evidence** there had been communication with appropriate patients
- Healthwatch quickly picked up issues in the new service and sought patient stories. With these concerns the team put a callout, via social media, for more **patient feedback**
- Provided patient feedback to commissioners and covered apology and plea to public on 14th April
- Healthwatch took evidence to **regional Healthwatch network** and recommended a **learning event follows the serious incident to inform future commissioning/service** implementation
- Called for **transparency around the serious incident findings**.
- Raised aware of the lack of a visible **complaint policy/process** with provider and commissioners.
- Have had follow-up conversations with patients to ask for future feedback on service to see if improvements are being realised. **Follow up** meeting set with provider as a learning opportunity.

Procurement Engagement

Healthwatch representatives participated and witnessed the stakeholder engagement process that went with the procurement of the new service, following the incumbent provider (South East Coastal Ambulance Service) serving notice on the contract.

The feedback from this process had been very positive and it was clear from the commissioning update, given to the Commissioning Patient Reference Groups, that this engagement had informed and shaped the specification for a new service.

Implementation Period

Through our influencing network we became aware of a potential issue relating to renal patients. This was raised with Coastal CCG in March. We were initially told the eligibility criteria had not changed. We were subsequently told that renal patients would no longer be automatically eligible for patient transport and we challenged how this was being communicated to patients.



The following week we received evidence of the communication sent to renal patients, which included how people could access staff through renal clinics to raise concerns/questions.

New Service Feedback

Healthwatch quickly became aware of issues in the delivery of the new services (which started on the 1st April 2016) and began to seek detailed patient experiences. Healthwatch Social Media communications created some very lively twitter chatter and revealed a patient was still waiting in hospital for transport at 10pm.

Evidence was provided to coastal CCG. This led to us being supplied with a briefing, which has since been circulated widely, include to the commissioning patient reference groups.

Healthwatch West Sussex shared the apology from commissioners and the new service provider, detailed in the briefing and a separate letter to Healthwatch.

Healthwatch also tweeted the plea for people to only call the service if their transport needs were within the next 48 hours.

Knowing the commissioners had raised a serious incident relating to the first days of the new service, we took evidence to the regional Healthwatch network on 14th April. Healthwatch West Sussex suggested a need to hold a **learning event to support the system** to understand what had happen - so this can be **used to inform future service implementation**. Healthwatch East Sussex agreed to take this recommendation to the lead CCG (as the CCG is in their area).

We shared with local CCGs the recommendation for a learning event, which has been well received. We are also calling for transparency around the serious incident findings.

At a meeting with Western Sussex Hospital Foundation Trust, on 18th April we heard the new provider responded very quickly. We were told both hospitals received dedicated support from the second day so that discharged patients could return home. The Trust also spoke positively about the improvement their patients are now experiencing.

Healthwatch have heard from a programme lead for northern CCGs an update on the situation at the joint Commissioning **Patient Reference Groups** meeting this week. This update started with an example from the 1st April (when the service started). The CCG had taken a call from a person who told them they had been called the evening before, e.g. 31st March (exiting provider period) at 8.30pm to say their transport for the following day had been cancelled and the person had been told to call the new service provider the following day.

We recently raised concern with the new provider, Coperforma, that there is not a visible **complaints process** and are clarifying with the CCGs if this is a contractual requirement. The new provider has agreed to forward their complaints process and the CCG is following this up.

Follow up

We are talking to patients who have been affected by the implementation issues and are confident people will update us if, and when, they use the patient transport service again.

Healthwatch West Sussex will be meeting with the CEO of Coperforma at the beginning of May to discuss patient experience and learning.