



HEALTHWATCH PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE (PLEs) SUPPORT TO THE MENTAL HEALTH STEERING GROUPS

April to June 2017

Introduction

This is a short quarterly report to provide feedback to both the commissioners and to the Mental Health Alliances' Steering Groups to support the development of the contract specification and outcomes from this. The report has been produced collaboratively with the six People with Lived Experience (PLEs) and using their supervision feedback.

The role of local Healthwatch in the Mental Health Alliances is to provide and manage a service to support the delivery of an impartial, **lived experience perspective on the Alliance Steering Groups**. This promotes wider consultation with people who use mental health services to help the Steering Groups to keep to an ongoing commitment to work in the spirit of co-production.

The outputs of the Alliance work will be known as *Pathfinder West Sussex*.

Performance Report

As per the specification requirements we are reporting against the following key performance indicators.

Performance Area	Target	Actual
Number of individuals with lived experience are recruited and maintained	6	6
Performance Reviews undertaken (supervision sessions)	6	6
Training programme following recruitment*	6	6
Individuals get an average 12 hours support	6	6

* All PLEs received induction training in December 2016 - January 2017.



Added value through PLE involvement and consumer experience

This report covers the ongoing support and supervision of the PLE team and their contribution to the work and development of Pathfinder West Sussex.

What is working well

The PLE's have continued to demonstrate there are a strong team, developing a culture of peer support that recognises their individual needs and mental wellbeing.

There is an ongoing commitment from the PLE's to add value to the work of the Alliances. The team continue to be motivated and driven.

The PLEs offer a flexible approach to their work and manage their hours effectively. They have all delivered significant additional 'voluntary' hours this quarter. This has been primarily to attend hub and sub-group meetings. Their attendance at these meetings is driven by their desire to see Pathfinder West Sussex work and their overall commitment to the project. They are bringing significant added value to the main meetings, as a result of sharing what is happening across the hubs/sub-groups during the monthly PLE supervision. Individuals have the chance to reflect on best practice and feed this experience into the main meeting. Therefore, this project benefits from these 'voluntary' hours above and beyond the original remit for the PLEs.

The team feel their contribution to discussions and work plans is valued and have said that their voices are being heard and respected. During meetings they have initiated tough conversations around capacity and time.

Because of their positive and effective team culture, they have been able to share information across the smaller sub groups and hub development committees, ensuring there is a consistent approach and that good practice is duplicated. An example of this has been demonstrated in the involvement of 'critical partners' in the development of the local hubs. The team came together in supervision and discussed the progress of each hub and were able to influence the list of critical partners that have been invited to each hub development conversation.

They have also played a key role in influencing and driving forward an effective communication plan. Some of the PLE's have been involved in the development of the Pathfinder West Sussex website and others have been involved in paperwork development. This has ensured that there is a focus on plain English and easy read formats, as well as enabling constructive debates regarding the language used in public facing documents and limiting the use of jargon.

Overall, the PLE's feel that they have been able to bring their user and carer perspective to all the discussions and have supported the Alliance members to see their work plans in a different light, moving away from their organisational and corporate process driven perspective.

Challenges

There **continue to be a number of challenges**, identified by the PLE's, which could affect the progress of the Pathfinder West Sussex work plan.

Concerns raised by PLE's and discussed at supervision, are **linked to the need for a strategic project plan, that sets out clear objectives and defined timelines**, to achieve readiness for the soft-launch planned for 1 October 2017. It would also benefit the PLEs and help them with their networking to have the shared and agreed understanding of what is meant by soft-launch, as this seems to be interpreted differently across the hubs.

There seems to be a mismatch in interpretation of the service specification and what is being planned at local levels. There appears to be a wide variation.

At times the PLE's feel that progress is slow and difficult to measure. This issue is linked to the absence of a Project Manager or Alliance Leader and without this strong leadership and direction, all the subgroups and work plans appear to be moving forward at different speeds, without the necessary checks and balances.

There was a lot of anticipation around the recruitment and implementation of a Project Manager. In the months leading up to the person starting, there was a sense that decisions were deferred/slowed down, with an expectation that the appointment would help to drive things forward in a more coordinated way.

There was a real sense of disappointment that the Project Manager recruitment was not successful and with the news that the new appointment had not worked out, there was an inevitable dip in morale. There is hope amongst the team that this situation will improve and that a successful appointment will soon be made.

PLEs **recognise the stretched capacity of all** involved, with individuals within the Alliance organisations, effectively working as project managers, on top of their other duties. They are sympathetic to this and know how hard people have been working and the impact this has on their own resilience. The PLEs **reflect that the lack of a single-point of management is having a negative impact on the overall project**. They wonder how realistic it is for a project of this scale to succeed without clear leadership from the start and the need for unanimous decision making only seems to serve to delay progress. These parameters were set out before the PLE involvement and highlight the challenges that members face.

There have been health management issues within the team. The PLE's are very aware of their own needs and their own fluctuating mental wellbeing. Some members of the team have taken time out when they have felt it necessary to focus on their own wellbeing. Whilst this has not had a negative impact on the team's involvement or contribution to the work plan, they have had to manage their time and their work carefully. This has been achieved with the mutual support of their colleagues and the strong communication and supportive culture that has been established through the group supervision sessions.



The PLE's have said that one of the **main challenges** with their work this quarter has been in involving and networking with other services users and carers. It has been difficult for them **to understand which elements of the work plan they can go out and consult or share with their peers and networks**. This has been raised by the PLE Stakeholder group and it has been suggested that **clearly identified actions are recorded in the minutes of the steering group meetings**, so that the PLE's have explicit direction as to which discussions can be taken to a wider network and where they can seek the feedback and involvement of other services users. This has not happened in the three subsequent steering group meetings.

Another area where the PLE's seek clarification is around the communication strategy and the Pathfinder West Sussex branding. The development of the corporate identity, website and newsletter has been an interesting process. The PLE's have been unsure as to what should be shared with a wider audience and what the key messages should be.

The challenge now for Healthwatch is to **manage the risk to the PLEs personal resilience and esteem**, should the Pathfinder West Sussex deliverables fall short of achieving aspired outcomes.

Learning from this experience

We have established a regular routine of review meetings with a small group of Alliance members to evaluate and discuss the involvement of the PLE's. This now occurs every quarter, after the publication of this report. These meetings offer a really positive and practical tool for Healthwatch and the Alliance to come together and discuss what is working well, where the challenges are, to explore solutions and agree practical actions.

The PLE team feel that they have an effective voice but they sometimes struggle to get their voices heard. This was discussed at the review meeting and the Alliance members have ensured that this has improved, by asking for specific PLE feedback. It can still be difficult for the PLEs to be heard during some of the breakout discussions.

The team has felt that their involvement in the hub development has been significant and effective. They have been further motivated through their shared knowledge and ability to influence, which has been identified through their group supervision sessions. They feel that they have been able to successfully keep the hub development focused and on track. For example: PLEs have used their individual knowledge of hubs, to collate a list of critical partners and this was taken to the main meeting so each hub could cross reference their own lists to ensure all necessary partners were communicated with.



Looking Forward

Leadership/project management role is crucial. Defining the launch of Pathfinder West Sussex, the branding, the website and all the communications involved in this, needs to be agreed in terms of what is meant by a soft launch in October and what must be achieved for April 2018. This is seen as a priority by the PLE's and a crucial part of the success of the work plan.

The involvement of PLE's in the Alliance Steering Groups has also been seen as a positive and innovative model by Healthwatch England, with the Healthwatch West Sussex team delivering a workshop around the PLE model at the National Healthwatch Conference in July.

The Healthwatch team have attended a number of stakeholder events to promote the PLE involvement model and gave a presentation at the Capitol Projects AGM as well as empowering the PLE's to act as Healthwatch Ambassadors at external events and functions.

All these activities will continue and build throughout the next quarter.

Some of the deliverables should be achieved with the soft launch of Pathfinder West Sussex on 1 October 2017 and main launch in April 2018. The PLEs expect to be more involved in the planning and delivery of this next exciting phase.

The PLEs are conscious that their current contracts only run until December 2017. At the outset of the project a desire for the PLE involvement to be ongoing was discussed. Agendas suggest that PLE/Healthwatch element of the project is being discussed but Healthwatch has yet to receive any feedback. We would welcome a discussion so that we have clarity on the future of the project and can be as open as possible with the PLE team.

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