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We want to hear your views on the proposed future of Walk in Centres in Sandwell and West Birmingham

Healthwatch Birmingham welcomes the opportunity to respond to Sandwell and West Birmingham's consultation on *We want to hear your views on the proposed future of Walk in Centres in Sandwell and West Birmingham*. Our key role is to make sure that patients, the public, service users, and carers (PPSuC) are at the heart of service improvement in health and social care. In line with our role, we have focused our comments on:

- The involvement of PPSuCs in developing the proposals.
- Whether the proposals are responsive to the individual needs of those accessing services, ensuring that they do not lead to health inequality.

Due to our remit of covering services in Birmingham, we have focussed our comments on the service for West Birmingham residents, and the proposals for Summerfield Walk-In Centre.

We welcome that the CCG is committed to delivering an improved and sustainable primary and urgent care system, which operates seven days a week. As well as ensuring that these services are safe, high-quality, easily accessible, appropriate, integrated and responsive.

We are pleased to see that even though UTCs are replacing walk-in-centres, in West Birmingham the location will remain the same. One key principle of Urgent Treatment Centres is that they are delivered in or as close to where people live as possible, minimising disruption and inconvenience for patients and their families.

We are encouraged that the CCG will be working with colleagues in Birmingham to ensure a joined up approach for patients accessing urgent care in the Ladywood and Perry Barr areas.

Patient and Public Involvement

Pre-consultation

Healthwatch Birmingham would like to commend the CCG that the proposal documents outline the engagement activities that have taken place in over the last few years, and that they include the findings which have been taken into account when designing the proposals.

The consultation page made available to the public contains a Frequently Asked Questions document which is clear as to what patient and public involvement activities has taken place prior to the consultation.

In addition the equality impact assessment does make clear that the views of specific users - namely young people and individuals not registered with a local GP - have

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been taken into consideration. However, it is not clear how these specific engagement activities have influenced the proposals being consulted on.

Methods for engaging and involving the public

Healthwatch Birmingham would like to commend the CCG for offering the public and service users, different ways to be involved. We note that the public and service users can give their feedback by filling an online survey, freepost and by attending public events that have been held throughout the consultation period. We also note that assistance to complete the survey has been offered. We are pleased to see that public events have been held with a variety of groups that may represent specific users.

We also note that although the consultation page does not promote the availability of information in alternative formats, the proposal documents do outline how to request these. We would like to read in the consultation report the range of people that the CCG was able to reach through these methods.

Content of Consultation

Healthwatch Birmingham feels that the consultation uses clear language and that jargon has been explained. Therefore, people with no barriers (i.e. language or other communication needs) can access these documents. However, we are concerned that the equality impact assessment documents were only made available by the CCG on 7 February, towards the end of the consultation, so did not allow all members of the public taking part in the consultation to have a fully informed view. Failure to provide the necessary information means that people being consulted do not understand the issues and cannot give informed and meaningful responses.

We note that in the equality impact assessment carers were considered, and that it was identified there was a lack of meaningful useable data to measure the potential impact, and that further work was required before implementation of the plan. Healthwatch Birmingham would like to see specific reference to carers in the consultation report, and the work that has been undertaken to understand their needs in developing and finalising this proposal.

We are pleased to see the CCG have made clear how people's views will be taken into consideration, and that it is outlined the report will be presented to the CCG's Governing Body. Outlining this helps people to understand the process that the CCG uses when decision making, and transparency on this can only increase people's satisfaction that their views have been heard.

Post Consultation

Healthwatch Birmingham would like to urge the CCG to ensure that this report does not only report the final proposal but demonstrates how the views of the public have

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influenced this. This will ensure that people feel part of the decision-making process and not that they are just commenting on proposals that might have already been made.

Patient, Public and Service User Experience

The feedback that Healthwatch Birmingham has received over the years from patients and the public on their experience of accessing Summerfield Walk-In Centre has been positive. Particularly highlighted has been the understanding, care and compassion of staff.

...was seen very quickly by a nurse practitioner. She was very friendly, reassuring and efficient. Was going to give me one treatment, but after examining me thoroughly and listening to my symptoms, gave me a more suitable treatment. Asked about how I was generally, as well as about the problem I came in for, and treated me like a human being. Made such a difference to be treated with compassion.

...they are well aware of my special needs

... the nurse was nice and easy to talk to, she showed genuine care and attention not just for my foot but to other problems I was experiencing, I wish all nurses could be like this one today, sometimes when people are in distress all they need is to feel that someone has listened and showed care, because it makes all the difference to people who are anxious.

Generally, the feedback we hear about Urgent Care/Walk-In services has raised issues that service users face from long waiting times.

Long waits in the afternoon. Need more doctors. Always one or two hours to be seen. Lots of people especially on Saturday and Sunday.

The waiting times are long, first thing in the morning is best.

Upon arrival, the waiting rooms were crammed with people, several were standing and more were waiting in the exit lobby. I was informed by the reception staff that the wait would be in excess of 2 hours. I asked if there was any system of triage as my daughter was feeling extremely unwell at the time and was unable to sit down due to the lack of space - as there was no way of avoiding a 2 hour + wait, I made the difficult decision to leave. The building was over heated, patients were having to sit too close to each other and I estimated that it may have been an hour before a chair became available.

Feedback has also indicated a preference in using a, urgent care centre/walk-in centre over attending A&E or trying to get an appointment with a GP Practice.

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Good as can get appointments at the weekend. Rather than sitting in A&E for hours.

Had to access walk in clinic. GP booked up weeks in advance.

As my regular GP, could only offer me a telephone consultation with a nurse on the following day my husband took me to the nearest walk in centre.

Went to the Urgent Care Centre as I had a worsening problem and couldn't get in to see my GP

It is important therefore that the CCG considers the potential impact of an increase in service users and the effect on waiting times, though we note that the facility to book appointments using NHS 111 may mitigate some of this.

Conclusion

We are pleased that the CCG have made clear their engagement process throughout developing this proposal, and that the equality impact assessment has been made public. We are satisfied that the needs of residents of West Birmingham, and their views, have been taken into account.

Yours Sincerely,



Sarah Walmsley

Data & Insight Officer



Andy Cave

Chief Executive Officer