

Birmingham Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy: Creating a Bolder, Healthier City

Healthwatch Birmingham welcomes the opportunity to respond to Birmingham City Council's consultation on *Birmingham Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy: Creating a Bolder, Healthier City*. 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:

- Patient and Public Involvement.
- Whether the proposed strategy is responsive to the needs of Birmingham residents

Patient and Public Involvement

Healthwatch Birmingham are pleased to see that the consultation has been available since September giving the public time to consider the issues in detail and respond. We are pleased to see that as well as the strategy document being available, a link to a recording of the webinar held was added to the page after the event.

We do note though that the strategy and survey has not been offered in any other format, such as easy read or community languages, excluding those with language or sensory impairment needs from taking part. There is not a phone number or postal address to allow anyone without digital access to easily respond.

Healthwatch Birmingham note that the council hosted a public webinar on this consultation which allowed partners and the public to attend and ask questions. We are pleased to see outlined in the strategy how preceding work has influenced its content, including consultation, engagement and research. We also understand partner workshops have been held this year, and the youth board has been consulted. We are keen to see further engagement and co-production as the strategy becomes an action plan.

Whilst the survey itself allows room for comments, the questions asked do not seem designed to provoke much engagement from the public, other than stating whether they agree or not with the statements. Asking more open ended questions would give the public a better opportunity to engage with the strategy in a meaningful way. We would like to encourage the Health and Wellbeing Board to look at more effective public consultation methods and questions for its future work.

The responses to this engagement need to be assessed to see if they are representative of citizens in this city. If the responses are not representative, then further targeted engagement work needs to be held on this strategy to ensure all communities in the city have had a chance to understand and engage with the future work of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Healthwatch Birmingham would like to urge you to not only listen to people's views but also demonstrate clearly how these views have affected the final strategy and subsequent action



plan. This will ensure that people feel a valued part of the decision-making processes in our city.

The strategy

Healthwatch Birmingham are pleased to see the clear focus of reducing health inequalities that runs throughout the strategy. Our report '[Health Inequalities: Somali people's experiences of health and social care services in Birmingham](#)' highlights many areas of inequity and inequality that the strategy seeks to address.

We agree with the five core themes, and recognise many of the issues outlined from our own engagement with the public. The three stage life course approach and two cross cutting approaches provide a thorough way to examine each of the five themes and the issues around them. However for engagement with the public, a simpler structure and outline may have been beneficial.

We recognise theme 2: Mental wellness and balance as particularly crucial at the current time. During the national lockdowns we were contacted by many members of the public who were looking for increased support for their mental health. We have also seen a greater level of negative feedback for mental health services in the city. People have also told us about the effect on their mental health from the delays to care and treatment.

When looking at measuring impact, as well as the matrix indicators outlined, the Health and Wellbeing Board should consider public feedback as a measure and indicator of improvements felt in the city, and also a useful tool for identifying any systemic barriers that people are experiencing. These can then be identified and acted on much sooner.

Healthwatch Birmingham commend the Health and Wellbeing Board for such a comprehensive and ambitious strategy. We believe that the public should be at the heart of decision making, and look forward to seeing further engagement and co-production as the action plan develops and throughout the life of the strategy.

Yours Sincerely,



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