

Staying Independent at Home

Healthwatch Birmingham welcomes the opportunity to respond to Birmingham City Council's engagement on *Staying Independent at Home*. 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.
- Feedback we have heard from Birmingham citizens about current services, and unmet needs.

Patient and Public Involvement

Healthwatch Birmingham are pleased to see that the engagement survey has been available to respond to, and that the time period was extended, giving the public time to consider the issue and respond. We are however disappointed to note that there is very little information online to help the public understand the issue being asked about. We understand that this is an early stage of collecting views, but feel that more information would have helped the public understand what they were contributing towards. We also note that the survey has not been offered in any other format, such as easy read, 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 respond.

Healthwatch Birmingham are not aware of any other steps taken to engage the public in the development of this strategy. We are keen to see how further engagement is held with the public to complement this initial questionnaire, and whether a variety of engagement methods are used to best engage with Birmingham's diverse population.

The responses to this engagement need to be assessed to see if they are representative of citizens in this city, as well as the demographic of people using equipment services, and those not currently choosing to access services. If the responses are not representative, then further targeted engagement work needs to be held on this strategy.

A clearer understanding of the next steps for this strategy would help people to understand in more detail how this will actually affect them and the people they know. This could be more detail on the framework for action and the timescales for next stages. An impact assessment would also more clearly outline who will be most affected by any changes, and what mitigations need to be in place to ensure this is done fairly and equitably.

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. This will ensure that people feel part of the decision-making process.



Feedback from Birmingham Citizens

Healthwatch Birmingham have been contacted by several service users and relatives in the last three years to express problems with accessing equipment, and equipment provision.

We have been contacted by relatives who are unsure how to help their relative or arrange an assessment of their needs. This demonstrates that for some people the information is not clearly available, and they have needed to contact a service such as ourselves to provide the information.

Elderly disabled father lives in council property and in desperate need of a shower as he only has a bath. A shower would increase his quality of life immensely and would give him his independence back for his hygiene up keep and also for his safety.

Information required on where to go to discuss house adaptations for his two adult children with learning disabilities.

We were also contacted by people who had had equipment installed, but this was not fully adequate for them, or met all their needs. In this situation people did not know who to contact, and what the follow up process should look like.

We need specialist equipment to allow him to be more independent in the house. We have asked the occupational therapy team to install special taps so he can get water by himself, but they have refused saying they have no funding to do that. We've had to go to charities to beg for them to help with equipment like hot water tap as he can't lift the kettle. My husband also suffers from poor mental health so all of this is adding to the stress. We have some equipment such as electric bath lift but would also need additional hand reel, but if they are not able to provide the service then it is not helpful.

She had occupational therapy come out and fit her flat with several mobility aides, like a bath lift and a bed raiser, to help her around her flat. They were meant to come out again for a second assessment to assess how things were working in use, but because of Covid, they never did. She has two small children, and unfortunately the equipment isn't suitable with the kids. They've been trying to ring to get someone to come out, but have been told her case was closed.

We have also been contacted by families who have not been told or signposted correctly by their GP on how to access equipment that isn't privately funded. It may be that further information needs to be shared with GP practices on how their patients can access the services needed, as the below reports were from GP practices across Birmingham.



Calling on behalf of mother who needs an assessment with regards to assisted living equipment. Caller has previously had an appointment arranged by her GP which was operated by a private firm who sought to charge her for their services; caller states that her mother has no money and wishes to know what is available on the NHS for free.

Caller been told by her doctor to find an occupational therapist. She needs a shower put in at home.

Poor, distressing, unprofessional, uncaring inhuman. Impossible at times to get reception staff to arrange urgent discussion directly with GP. Even though they had confirm[ed] patient was terminal, he/we did not get appropriate support from this GP surgery when needed. We were desperate as we were struggling to feed and hydrate and medicate for weeks before [...] They eventually agreed to send a senior nurse practitioner and assessor from Social care which we were extremely grateful for [...] The nurse practitioner came and witnessed how poor the patient was and she and social care worker (both of whom were amazing), arranged equipment, care workers 4 times a day, request for liquid medication as he could not swallow his tablets.

We also heard from a family who had a relative discharged from hospital, but it was clear the transport services did not know how the equipment she had needed to be used. Again it may be that further information is needed to be given to such services on what to do when faced with a similar situation.

The ambulance drivers/paramedics who brought her home placed her in her bespoke chair omitting to place the all day sling underneath her which is the only and correct way she is transferred from chair to bed with the use of a suitable hoist. The hoist is a sizeable piece of mobility equipment in a living room of modest size. It is in full view of any person visiting my mother who herself copes with one room living. In addition the black all day sling was also clearly in view on her single bed alongside the bespoke chair. However her carers were unable to transfer her to bed for personal care on their teatime call, 3rd of the day, due to the omission of the sling which resulted in her carers having to call 999 for paramedic assistance.

As the people of Birmingham wait for delayed treatment and operations due to the pandemic, we have also heard how this has led to people becoming increasingly disabled in the short term. It may be that these short term needs could be met to prevent people from becoming even more unwell whilst on waiting lists. We are aware that there are sizeable waiting lists for almost all services in Birmingham.



He's still waiting for his re-scheduled op. I can't express how much pain he is in [...] he's unable to sleep in his own bed due to being so uncomfortable. He manages a few hours in his armchair. It's got to a point now where family members are having to help with daily duties

Healthwatch Birmingham are pleased to see the commitment from Birmingham City Council to improve the current services available by developing this strategy. We believe that service users should be at the heart of decision making, and look forward to seeing this strategy develop. The public of Birmingham need to be kept informed and engaged as this moves forwards.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kalebe".

Chipiliro Kalebe-Nyamongo
Research and Policy Manager

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah".

Sarah Walmsley
Data and Insight Officer

