

Healthwatch Leeds - Sense Check - Better Care Fund

Key Findings

Overall the areas chosen were supported. Ones that particularly resonated with respondents were:

- Eldercare Facilitators
- Enhancing Integrated Neighbourhood Teams
- Mainstream Winter Initiatives
- Frequent Flyers

Key issues worth considering include:

Dementia - wherever possible services should be provided at home or in the community rather than hospital. The BME focus group felt that there should be a greater focus on awareness raising in communities - this could help diagnosis rates.

Technology - it is important to take a balanced approach here, increased use of technology should not be at the expense of less person to person contact. Concerns about the ethical use and protection of personal information should be taken into account.

Falls - investing in the Falls Service is important, as it can help with quicker hospital discharges and build people's confidence back up in their homes and communities if the correct measures are put in place. It was suggested that the third sector could help with this.

Integrated Community Care Beds - considered to be of the utmost importance, particularly with regard to end of life care, dignity and respect.

Winter Initiatives - Not many of the participants were aware of 2013's Winter Initiatives, and felt that in future they should be publicised in GP Surgeries more.

Seven Day Services - this approach was viewed positively.

Research - this was seen as important and useful.

Quality Standards - some expressed a view that it would be useful to consider whether some existing services (such as Primary Care) should already be providing a high quality service - without need for support from the Better Care Fund.

What we did

The very short timescale prior to submission of the Better Care Fund proposal has meant that Healthwatch Leeds has not been able to formally consult on this bid, but has instead used its networks to take soundings from members of the public.

For pragmatic reasons Healthwatch Leeds has focussed on the Pump Priming element of the Invest to Save Scheme - which has a value of approximately £16m.

The Better Care Fund aims to reduce avoidable hospital and care home admissions, reducing re-admissions and facilitating discharge. To this end Healthwatch Leeds focussed on seeking views from members of the public who had a personal interest or experience in this agenda.

Healthwatch Leeds addressed this in two ways.

- Surveys were sent out to Healthwatch Leeds members by post to give them the opportunity to read through the survey and get an understanding of it. Telephone interviews then took place with 61 members, each lasting around 45 minutes. People were asked to rate the importance of each initiative and provide comments.
- Second, 3 focus groups were held - involving 29 members of the public. One of these groups was targeted specifically at Black and Minority Ethnic communities in Leeds. The other two focus groups involved a variety of participants of differing ages living with different health conditions. Further equality monitoring information is available upon request.

Findings from surveys

Results from the survey ‘sense check’ is that all areas identified in the Invest to Save scheme were considered to be important. Combining responses for “Very Important” and “Fairly Important” all proposals had approval ratings of between 69% and 93%. Those that had the greatest support were:

- Eldercare facilitators
- Enhancing Integrated Neighbourhood Teams
- Mainstream Winter Initiatives
- Frequent Flyers

Summary of survey results - sample size 61

Initiative	Respondents stating ‘very important’	Fairly Important	Percentage positive (very important plus fairly important)
Eldercare Facilitators	38	18	92
Enhancing Integrated Neighbourhood Teams	37	20	93
Mainstream Winter Initiatives – Including a Move to Seven Day Working	37	20	93
Frequent Flyers – A Multi-agency Approach	37	20	93
Expanding the Community Intermediate Care Beds Scheme	34	18	85
Medication Prompting – Dementia	33	18	84
Workforce Planning and Development	31	15	75

Initiative	Respondents stating 'very important'	Fairly Important	Percentage positive (very important plus fairly important)
Primary Care Proactive Management	31	16	77
Enhancing Primary Care	30	23	87
Falls Service	25	23	79
Improving System Intelligence	24	18	69
Information Technology	22	23	74
Ambulance Services	20	24	72

Comments from the survey and focus groups

Enhancing Primary Care

- The general consensus from the survey responses was that it is very important to offer additional support to vulnerable patients, as they need it the most and don't always know how to ask for it themselves. There were however some points questioning how these patients would be identified, and why weren't GPs doing this anyway.
- Focus groups, while the majority of participants considered this initiative to be important because of the significant role of the GP as a first point of contact, able to identify and help vulnerable patients. However, a significant minority felt that it was more important to invest in other front line members of staff who do meet this need in the community.

Eldercare Facilitators

- The majority of survey respondents felt that dementia care is very important, especially as people are living longer. It was also suggested that people would respond better to treatment and testing in a familiar environment (home/GP surgery), as opposed to a hospital. The qualifications of the Eldercare Facilitators were questioned, as their ability to work with these two groups was considered to be very important. In the survey responses a lot of emphasis was placed on dementia, not mental health.
- Out of the focus groups, the majority of participants considered this initiative to be important. Some of the views expressed included:

- o a preference for dementia testing/treatment in the GP surgery/home rather than in a hospital, as elderly people can find the hospital environment to be very intimidating.
- o a need for more understanding within communities about dementia - this view came from the BME focus group. There was also a minority view that there were already enough people working in this field.

Medication Prompting - Dementia

- The majority of survey respondents felt that ensuring patients who are living with dementia are taking their medication correctly is very important. Some expressed concerns about the costs of community nurses, and wondered whether better use of technology or collaboration with other organisations might be more cost effective.
- The majority of focus group participants considered this initiative to be important. Some were surprised that more use was not being made of Telecare. It was noted that the limitations of technological approaches need to be clearly understood - for example technology was felt to be less effect at monitoring whether people have actually taken their medication. Some participants felt that funding might be better invested in raising awareness of dementia.

Primary Care Proactive Management

- Generally respondents felt that the initiative is a good idea, particularly if it has worked elsewhere. They did however have concerns about people being able to actually use the technology, the resources that may have to go into training them to use it and also the cost of the technology.
- The majority of focus group respondents supported this proposal. Some were aware that this has worked well elsewhere. There were concerns that this should not replace human interaction which elderly people do value. It will be important to ensure that elderly people do not feel anxious and isolated.

Investing in the Falls Service

- The general consensus of the survey responses was that the initiative is very important, as elderly people can often feel very vulnerable after having a fall. Also adaptations being made at home will make for a quicker discharge from hospital which is better for the patient and the hospital. Adaptations and actually spending time with the patient to build their confidence back up will also contribute to preventing falls the future.

- The majority of participants considered this proposal to be important and suggested that the third sector has a significant contribution to make, and highlighted the importance of assessing people's homes to facilitate safe and effective discharge.
- A minority of participants did not consider this initiative to be as important as the others, we have not captured their rationale for this. However, it may be because they are not fully aware of the work of the Falls Service.

Investing in Expanding the Community Intermediate Care Beds Scheme

- There was a very strong consensus from the survey responses saying that the initiative is very important, as people can be kept in hospitals for too long which can be detrimental to their health and is costly for the hospital.
- The majority of participants considered it to be very important and made very strong points about the importance of this initiative in terms of dignity and care, in particular end of life care.
- A minority of participants did not consider this initiative to be as important as the others, we have not captured their rationale for this.

Investing in Enhancing Integrated Neighbourhood Teams

- The survey responses show that respondents consider this to be a very important initiative, as at present discharge from hospital can be problematic for people, in particular for those who are vulnerable and going into an empty home. There are also problems when people are discharged late at night and at weekends, as the staff aren't there to support this.
- All focus group participants considered the initiative to be very important. Rehabilitative care in the community was felt to be very important in aiding people's recovery. However, social and health care teams will need to work together to ensure that this is a smooth discharge for people and an Equipment Service that was open for 7 days a week would aid people's discharge at weekends.

Investing in Mainstreaming Winter Initiatives - Including a Move to Seven Day Working

- Seven day working was supported. There was however some confusion around Winter Initiatives, as people hadn't seen many this year as the weather hadn't been too bad in comparison to past years. Having said that, there was an acknowledgement to how difficult winter can be for vulnerable people.

- Out of the focus groups, the majority of participants considered the initiative to be very important. They noted that they hadn't seen any Winter Initiatives in their GP Surgeries, so they felt that GPs need to be supporting the initiatives more.

Investing in Frequent Flyers - a Multi-agency Approach

- The general consensus from the survey responses was that this is an important initiative, as it is preventative as opposed to curative. However, as with the first initiative about GPs identifying the top 2%, it should be done as a standard. It was also expressed that health and social care services would have to work well together to ensure that adequate care plans are put in place. Several respondents didn't like the term, 'frequent flyers'.
- All focus groups considered the initiative to be very important. All the participants said that this should be done anyway to help drive hospital admittances down. However, there were concerns about minority groups who may not be registered with GPs, such as the Gypsy and Traveller community.

Investing in Ambulance Services

- There was not a clear consensus from the survey response, as respondents found the question hard to understand. Those that did said that services could be provided in the community (particularly testing) rather than having to use patient transport to get patients to and from their appointments.
- As with the survey the focus group discussions did not provide a clear consensus. Some participants felt that people don't always need to access A&E they need to know where to go and for this to be clearly signposted within the community. Others felt that patient transport is often late, but the service does exist already so therefore requires less developmental focus. A significant minority felt that the existing service was good and didn't need any improvements.

Investing in Information Technology

- The majority of survey respondents felt positively about this proposal - particularly because it should lead to more joined up work between health and social care services, which would lead to the better provision of services particularly when people are discharged from hospital. Several respondents also suggested this information be shared with the third sector, as this would help ensure more joined up care.
- Focus group discussion was mixed. Those who considered it to be very important said that if the initiative encourages better joint-up working between health and social care services then it is of the utmost importance, as it will ensure better care is provided when patients are discharged from hospital. Participants who

rated this less highly had concerns about data protection both with regard to personal information being shared and it being lost.

Investing in Improving System Intelligence

- Survey respondents were supportive - recognising the importance of research to improving services.
- The majority of participants felt this was an important area - noting that research could help identify the causes of admission and therefore help prevent unnecessary admission. This would also help good practice to be shared with others.

Investing in Workforce Planning and Development

- Survey respondents felt that it is very important for staff to be trained in the fields that they are working. However, it is not just about training but values and attitudes of staff towards patients.
- The majority of focus group participants supported this initiative - noting that staff need to be trained so that they can do their jobs in the community.

Healthwatch Leeds

If you would like to discuss this report contact Jean Morgan, Acting Director of Healthwatch Leeds.

Telephone 0113 898 0035

info@healthwatchleeds.co.uk