

## Health and Wellbeing Board

12 February 2018

### Healthwatch Walsall - Access to Primary Care Services

#### 1. Purpose

Each year Healthwatch Walsall asks the public what their concerns are around health and social care services. The public told us that they were concerned about access to GPs in both normal surgery hours and for access outside hours following bad experiences of accessing GP appointments. We merged the two issues to look at access to GP services generally as our second priority area of research and engagement.

#### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Health and Wellbeing Board notes this report
- 2.2. That the Health and Wellbeing Board request Walsall CCG to provide a baseline of GP appointment availability across the Borough that can be routinely reviewed.

#### 3. Report detail

- A total of 839 surveys were carried out across Walsall.
- The data suggests that younger people are more likely to use Urgent Care Centres and A&E when GP appointments are not available and that confidence in getting through to the surgery and being able to access appointments affected the level at which respondent's accessed Urgent Care Centres and A&E.
- In our last report regarding GPs services in Walsall people told us (64% of respondents) *'that they were able to get an appointment when they felt that they needed one and there was better availability of appointments for nurses than doctors. On the day appointment availability could be problematic but so could the availability for routine appointments within the next few days with long waiting times meaning that some patients were taking emergency appointments when it was not really necessary just to secure an appointment.'*
- It is most concerning that this research had found this figure dropping markedly with only 43% of people stating they could get an appointment when they need it but with 49% saying they could not. This is a fall of 21%.
- This also corresponds in an increase of people accessing A&E when they can't get an appointment from 22% previously to 25% in this piece of research.
- The satisfaction with surgery opening times has also fallen from 86% to 75%, a drop of 11%.

- It is clear that people are generally having more difficulty seeing their GP when they feel they need to and factors affecting this could be lack of awareness of online booking and then a lack of online appointments coupled with poor conceptions of opening times and those that contact the surgery directly equally finding it hard to get appointments is putting greater pressure on A&E and Urgent Care Centres.
- Action must be taken by the GP practices and Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group to address the opening hours and availability of appointments both physical and virtual. This needs to be coupled with a plan to raise awareness of the places people can seek help other than their GPs, Urgent Care or A&E for minor health issues but safeguarding that the awareness raising also covers the subjects that people do need to go to their GPs for as well the life threatening issues that require an immediate response to.

#### **4. Implications for Joint Working arrangements:**

There is a resource implication for Walsall CCG if they agree to prepare a baseline report on appointment availability that can be reported on regularly to monitor ongoing appointment availability.

#### **4. Health and Wellbeing Priorities:**

- This report supports meeting three of the current Health and Wellbeing Board priorities:
  - Priority 3: Enable and empower individuals to improve their physical and mental health
  - Priority 7: Remove unwarranted variation in healthcare and ensure access to services with consistent quality
  - Priority 8: Enable those at risk of poor health to access appropriate health and care, with informed choice
- The report also supports a number of Marmot objectives namely:
  1. giving every child the best start in life
  2. enabling all children, young people and adults to maximize their capabilities and have control over their lives
  6. strengthening the role and impact of ill-health prevention.

### **Background papers**

Healthwatch Walsall - Access to Primary Care Services November 2017

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